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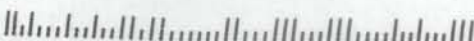
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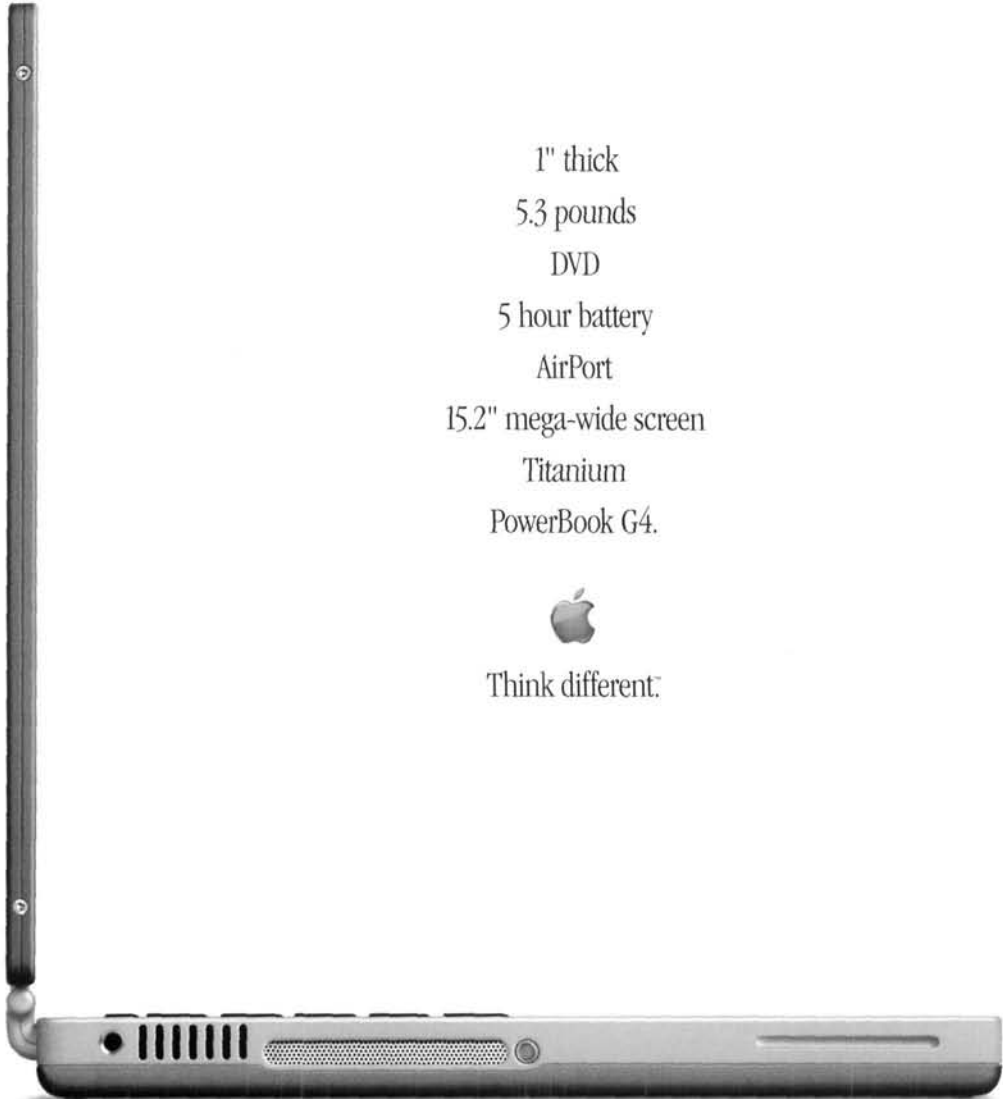
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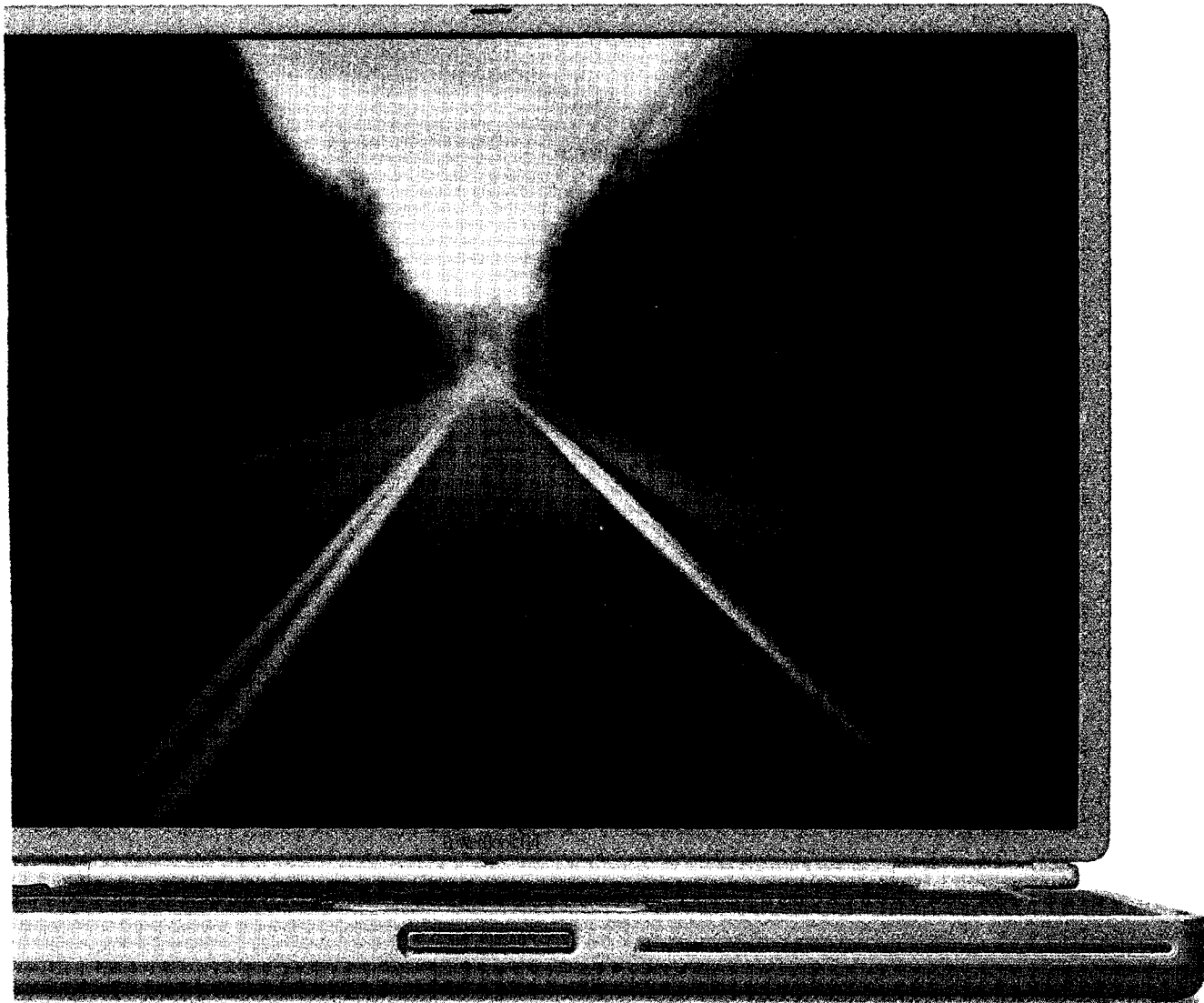
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THE Atlantic

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Cover art by Carter Goodrich; heading drawings throughout by Istvan Banyai



77 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET

The cover story in this issue is about the loss of privacy. This is, in the larger sense, not a new subject or a new fear. The worry that others will find out what one is really up to, or what one is really like, or simply where one is really living, is as primal as anything can be. None of us wants to be fully revealed, even those of us who reveal bits and pieces of ourselves for a living. "It is nice to be read," a colleague of mine at *The Cincinnati Post* used to say. "It is not nice to be read closely."

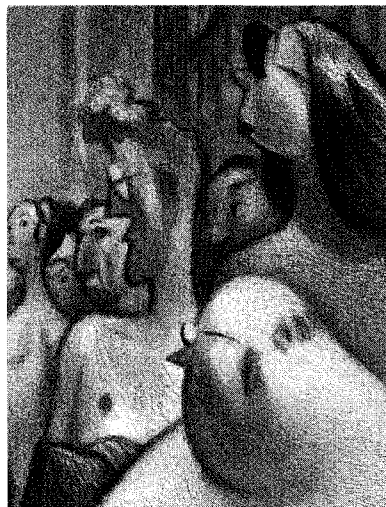
In an important way, though, this is a new subject and a new fear. Concern over the loss of privacy has grown tremendously in recent years. Toby Lester, the author of "The Reinvention of Privacy," reports that it consistently ranks in public-opinion surveys as a primary worry. And this is not merely a popular neurosis. The computer and the Internet and the marketplace have combined to make the invasion of privacy easy enough and profitable enough to form a basis for commerce on a mass scale. In the daily onslaught of my e-mail, along with pleas that I chuck my worthless life as a wage slave and **REDUCE TAXES—CREATE BIG INCOME**, I often find offers to assist me, for a becomingly modest fee, in locating anybody in the world I have any reason for wanting to locate, no questions asked. The offerers know that they are in the business of violating privacy (not mine, but that of my quarry—unless, of course, my quarry is also hunting me), and that my reasons for paying for this violation may well be terrible. "Find that sweetheart from long ago," I am urged. Yes, that might appeal to an old romantic, but it might appeal even more to the stalker whose victim has managed at last to escape him.

But there is unexpected good news, as our correspondent reports. The erosion of privacy has given rise to a market for the protection of privacy, which has given rise to inventions—"anonymizer technology," for example—that can defeat the inventions that invade. Soon we may again be able to hide from the person or persons or corporations unknown who seek our medical histories and credit records and the sacred truths of our buying patterns. For a modest fee, of course.

This is good. But what about those who suffer from the

preservation rather than the invasion of their privacy? What about the tens of millions who suffer the pain of never being violated at all? What about the people whom Oprah never picks, the people whose fetishes are so pathetic they are beneath the notice of Jerry Springer? Consider those whose long-buried scandals Mike Wallace can't be bothered to expose; those whose early-morning coffee is never disturbed by rude questions from Imus; those whose secret pasts and office trysts are of not the slightest interest to either Kenneth Starr or Larry Flynt; those for whom the bell, when it tolls, is always tolled by the man from the water company, never the gentleman from the *Times*. What about them?

Judging by the evidence all around us, there are far more people in this country who would gladly expose them-



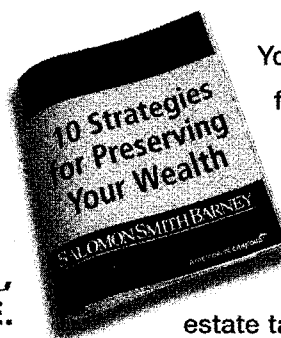
selves to the world—if only the world cared to look!—than there are those who want just to be left alone. This is America's true silent majority, and its millions are not silent by choice. They look at Monica Lewinsky, laid bare and shamed before a nation, and they think: Why her, O Lord? Why not me? As this is written, a new low in reality television is being plumbed (by the time it is read, we will have worked our way through several further descents)—the show *Temptation Island*. In this show four young couples are placed on an island, separated from each other and tempted to acts of infidelity through the attentions of twenty-

six attractive male and female seducers; their ordeals are videotaped and played for each other and for the television audience. What is interesting about this setup is that the couples who subjected themselves to this humiliation were offered no financial incentive. It is no surprise that there are people willing to mortify themselves for money; that is simply part of the natural order of things. But these people subjected themselves to global public humiliation *for the sheer pleasure of the experience*. Now, those are real Americans.

Mustn't attention be paid to all of us? Yes, certainly it must. Somewhere, in some emanation from some constitutional penumbra, must surely be found an indication of this right. Somebody should call Senators Lieberman and Hatch; there's a fine little bipartisan act of Congress waiting to be born. —MICHAEL KELLY

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IN THIS ISSUE

“You have zero privacy ... Get over it.” This stark assessment (by a Silicon Valley executive) of the state of privacy in the information age may not be true for long. **Toby Lester** (“The Reinvention of Privacy”) reports on how concern about the erosion of privacy has spawned a booming market for privacy-protection products and services and an entirely new sector of the economy: “the privacy space.” Lester, a former executive editor of *Atlantic Unbound*, has more recently been the editor of *Country Journal*. His January, 1999, *Atlantic* cover story reported on scholarly efforts to reinterpret the Koran.

The battle over the future of the Pacific Northwest is largely one of competing visions of the landscape, writes **Jonathan Raban** (“Battleground of the Eye”)—a struggle waged on terms defined by the landscape painters of the past three centuries. Raban traces the evolution of the region in art and the popular imagination, from Romantic wilderness to civic park to political stage. Raban is the author of numerous books, including *Bad Land* (1997), which won the National Book Critics Circle Award.

The British Broadcasting Corporation—its initials universally recognized—once enjoyed universal respect. No longer. **Geoffrey Wheatcroft** (“Who Needs the BBC?”) investigates the forces at work behind the decline of a once great institution. Wheatcroft is a frequent contributor to *The Atlantic*. His most recent book is *The Controversy of Zion* (1996).

Bill Roorbach (“Big Bend”) teaches creative writing in the M.F.A. program at Ohio State University. His story in this issue is drawn from his forthcoming collection, *Big Bend*, which won the 1999 Flannery O’Connor Award for Short Fiction. It will be published this month by the University of Georgia Press.

The kind of monumental immortality available to the rich and famous can now be had by the ordinary and the unsung—digitally, anyway. **Ed Leibowitz** (“The Hollywood Forever Way of Death”) reports on the content-rich afterlives of the residents of one of the nation’s first multimedia cemeteries. Also in Notes & Dispatches this month: **Murray Sayle**, from Tokyo, on a new memorial to the kamikaze; **Ian Frazier**, from Nome, Alaska, on the pleasures of sulking; **James Fallows**, from Silicon Valley, on why a hip corporate culture does not ensure success; **Jack Owens**, from Washington, D.C., on what’s keeping black women from joining the FBI; and **Ben Howe**, from Panama, on why the Pan-American Highway is still missing its midsection.

Few visitors to Belgium venture beyond Brussels to Ghent or Antwerp—livelier cities that bring the country into sharper focus. *The Atlantic* senior editor **Corby Kummer** (“An Alternative Belgium”) reports on a visit to the cities he calls “a crash course in Europe.”

Hatsy Shields (“Touring by the Book”) recounts her visits to some of the nation’s most beautiful and idiosyncratic private gardens—made possible by *The Garden Conservancy’s Open Days Directory*, an annual publication bound to please gardeners and nosy parkers alike. Her last article for *The Atlantic* explored kitchen gardens in France.

As an amateur pilot, **James Fallows** (“Around the World in Eighty Megabytes”) trained on flight-simulation software. Now he joins the millions of fans who fire up the software purely for fun. Our national correspondent explains the growing appeal of armchair flying.

Eugene Genovese (“Getting States’ Rights Right”) won the Bancroft Prize for his book *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (1974), a

groundbreaking study of the moral and cultural complexities of slavery in the antebellum South. In this issue Genovese reviews Forrest McDonald’s *States’ Rights and the Union: Imperium in Imperio 1776–1876*, the first comprehensive history of the much maligned and largely misunderstood doctrine of states’ rights. Genovese’s most recent book is *A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South* (1999).

The clear-eyed lyricism of the aristocrat and industrialist Henry Yorke helped to establish him, under the name Henry Green, as one of the most distinctive English novelists of the twentieth century—and yet, astonishingly, his work remains largely unknown to Americans. **Brooke Allen** (“The Richness of the Moment”) reviews the first full-length biography of the man whose oblique style led one admirer to call him “the writer’s writer.” Allen is a frequent contributor to *The New Criterion*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Times*.

The West Wing finds itself in an interesting position: the television show depicts a fictional liberal presidency in the shadow of a real-life conservative Administration. The prevailing political climate is unlikely to matter, though, says **Chris Lehmann** (“The Feel-Good Presidency”), because politically speaking, the show has always been off in cloud-cuckoo-land. Lehmann is a senior editor for the *Washington Post Book World*.

David Schiff (“The Tradition of the Oldie”) casts his critical eye on National Public Radio’s list of the “100 most important American musical works of the 20th century” and finds that in many listeners’ minds, oldies have become synonymous with goodies. Schiff has written more than a dozen articles for the magazine, on subjects ranging from Duke Ellington to Kurt Weill.

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This month on the Web ...

Interview

The Invention of (Online) Privacy

Toby Lester, the author of this month's cover story, interviews the technology writer Steven Levy about Levy's new book, *Crypto: When the Code Rebels Beat the Government—Saving Privacy in the Digital Age*.

Soundings

Classic Poems Heard Anew

A unique series of online poetry readings in which several poets, in turn, give voice to the same classic poem. This month: Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" is read aloud by Linda Gregerson, J.D. McClatchy, and Heather McHugh, and is introduced in a brief essay by Gregerson.

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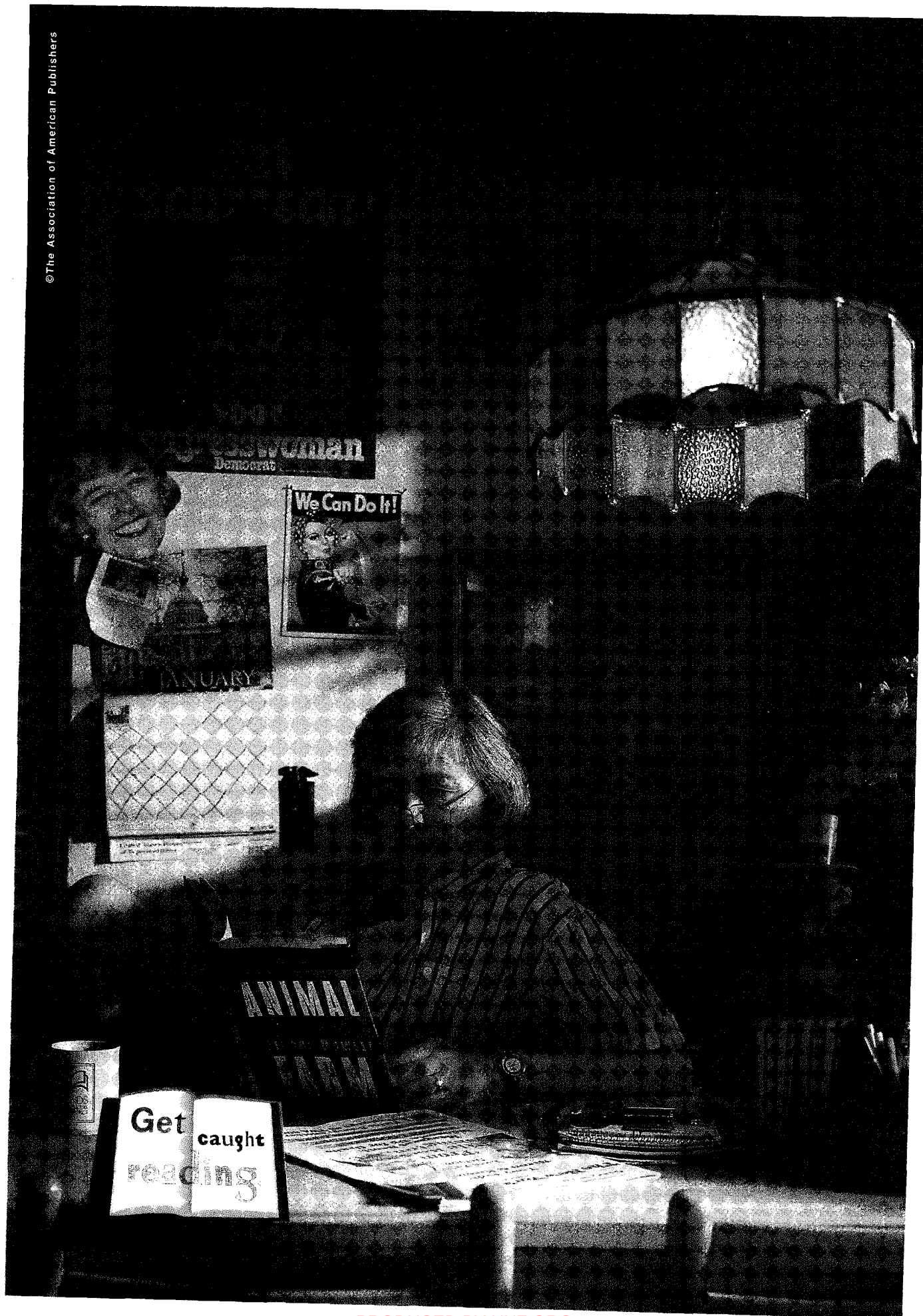
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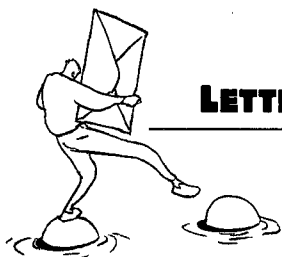
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MARCH 2001





LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Million-Dollar Nose

As a part owner of a vineyard that is a member of the Union des Grands Crus, let me state how we perceive Robert Parker ("The Million-Dollar Nose," by William Langewiesche, December *Atlantic*). He, like everyone else who tastes wine, has his own particular style preferences. Within those preferences, however, he recognizes quality and character, without which no fine wine is worth drinking. He is consistent, which makes his evaluations important and constructive. My colleagues and I have been forced to recognize that we can make better wines than we are making at present. Robert Parker contributed to making us aware of this. He has caused us to invest in our vineyards and winery and also in viticultural and vinicultural practices. We believe that in spite of an appellation less prestigious than some others in the Haut Medoc, we can make wines of distinction and character that will ultimately gain Parker's approval. I use his evaluation of my wine to get my partners to agree to invest and make greater efforts to improve our wine. I would not be able to do this if I were not convinced of Parker's total honesty and objectivity. He is contributing to the improvement of the product not only in Bordeaux but also in other areas.

Peter M. F. Sichel
Managing Director,
Château Fourcas Hosten, Llistrac-Medoc
New York, N.Y.

Because of experts like Robert Parker and the *Wine Spectator*, tens of thousands of acres of heritage varieties of wine grapes are being torn out throughout the world to be replaced by the "big three": Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Chardonnay. The result of the "Parkerization" of wine here in

America has been the emergence of a host of *garagistes* who no longer grow grapes but buy them like soybeans from vineyards hundreds or even thousands of miles away. Their wines are predictably thick and black, or thick and white. Any pretense of delicacy or complexity is gone in the pursuit of a 90+ from Parker or the *Spectator*. The true dark side of the wine industry is that these wines are the result of chemistry, not climate, of technology, not *terroir*. The idea that wine can be reduced to numbers has broken the bond between wine, landscape, and culture; it has brought us one step closer to a world where the places we live and the people we love are also chosen on the basis of numbers.

Gerard Bentryn
Bainbridge Island Vineyards
Bainbridge Island, Wash.

I take issue with William Langewiesche's remarks regarding the Master of Wine diploma. As a factual point, the exams leading to M.W. accreditation are not "based largely on the identification of obscure or antique wines"; they are essay exams on wine-making, grape growing, and the wine business, along with tastings of commercially available wines of various quality levels. And Langewiesche's characterization of M.W.s, implicit in his description of English writers' attitudes toward Parker, misrepresents holders of the M.W. by suggesting that they are largely embittered British wine critics. Of the 233 M.W.s alive today, forty-eight are not British, and fewer than half of those currently studying for the exams worldwide are British. Reflecting the international flavor of the group, an official North American branch of the M.W. organization is about to incorporate in the United States. Furthermore, many British

wine critics are not M.W.s, and many of the British M.W.s are not wine critics.

Mary Ewing-Mulligan
New York, N.Y.

It is a pity that William Langewiesche fails to explore Robert Parker's largely persona non grata status in Burgundy, because it illustrates the critical importance of interpretive experience in evaluating wine. From his enthusiastic endorsement of the uneven 1983 vintage to his dismissal of the excellent 1993 vintage, Parker has missed the mark in Burgundy as unerringly as he has hit the mark in Bordeaux. At the root of Parker's misunderstanding is his failure to grasp the concept of *terroir*—that combination of distinctive vineyards and climate that determines grape qualities and accounts for the subtle differences in great Burgundies. In a world of internationalization and homogenization, the Burgundians resisted Parker's choice to measure all wines by the same standards—deep color, extraction, and power.

In addition, Langewiesche repeats the now widely accepted view that Parker scooped everybody on the greatness of the 1982 Bordeaux vintage. In fact three months earlier *The New York Times* reported on a group of Bordelaise chateaux owners who were touring the United States and touting the vintage.

When the great vintage arrived, Parker's numerical system guided even the most thick-headed to proper buying decisions. But over the next twenty years Parker's influence on the futures market grew to the point where Bordeaux chateaux competed with one another to produce Parker-friendly wines. As the wines grew more opaque, thicker, more powerful, and more dominated by sweet, spicy new oak, they lost their *terroir*, their "whereness." It has

become increasingly difficult to identify their provenance as young wines.

Ironically, these same estates now fault Parker for praising the new-wave *garagistes* who completely scorn the idea of *terroir*. The estates that made their *bête* must now sleep with him.

Gregory Godels
Dave DeSimone
Pittsburgh, Pa.

A New Way to Be Mad

I was mesmerized by Carl Elliott's article "A New Way to Be Mad" (December *Atlantic*), but a repeated inaccuracy troubled me. That otherwise healthy people, for whatever reason, are electing to have their limbs cut off is sensational news to most of us, and would make us read the article in fascination. But Elliott need not force erotic elements that may or may not attach to the condition. His assertion that "the suffix *-philia* ... places these conditions in the group of psychosexual disorders called paraphilias" does not necessarily follow. The suffix can represent an erotic attraction, as in pedophilia or necrophilia, but it can also denote a tendency toward something that is completely unerotic. A hemophiliac has a tendency to bleed, and thrombophilia is a tendency to get blood clots. Maybe an apotemnophiliac is just a person with a tendency toward amputation. Elliott's etymology reminds me of a former student of mine, who, by reading the parts of the word individually, identified a thrombophiliac as "a person who is in love with somebody who has a blood clot."

Lisa B. Hughes
Clinton, N.Y.

Carl Elliott asks, "Why would anyone want an arm or a leg cut off?" In a story told in Ireland, a prison inmate asks the warden to have his arm cut off. The warden obliges. A few weeks later the inmate asks to have his other arm cut off. The warden obliges. Then the inmate asks to have a leg cut off. The warden responds, "I'm on to you. You want to get out of prison."

Ralph Slovenko
Detroit, Mich.

I am consistently baffled by the medical profession's need to classify psychological disorders based on symptomatology, as if taxonomy were a method by which we in the field of mental health could somehow better understand the nature of a person's intrapsychic structure, how the self is psychically organized. My impression of apotemnophilia is that it seems to be a rather unusual set of *symptoms*, but it is not a unique *disorder*. The further I read, the more Carl Elliott appeared to be describing garden-variety personality pathology with an extreme presentation of primitive defense mechanisms. Borderline personality disorder sometimes includes a behavioral symptom—well known to any psychologist who has treated patients with the diagnosis—of self-mutilation.

In my clinical experience patients who cut themselves do so not merely because, as the media often report, they need to feel something and the pain of their cutting helps them to reconnect with their split-off affect, but primarily because they feel helpless and out of control, and self-mutilating behaviors ameliorate those emotions by creating a sense of autonomy and power, a sense of *self*. If I discover that a patient has been self-mutilating, I become less concerned with diagnostic nomenclature and more concerned with the defenses the patient is using; this gives me far more information about the patient's self than does a formal diagnosis based on a symptom set.

I speculate that Elliott's patients have "always felt this way," as far back as they can remember, because of the developmental course of personality pathology, which, by its very definition, is set in place before the age of about four. The more severe the pathology, the earlier in life and the more critical the damage done to the self. I am wondering if apotemnophilia is not in essence simply a bizarre manifestation of a highly undeveloped and fragile self, a symbolic expression of affect that is disavowed and must be "cut off" because the effect on the core self is too much to bear.

Cynthia L. Ashley
LaSalle, Ill.

The Physics of Gridlock

I read "The Physics of Gridlock," by Stephen Budiansky (December *Atlantic*), with some interest. I have been following applications of dynamical systems theory since my days as a mathematics graduate student at Berkeley. The article was generally credible.

However, I was puzzled that Budiansky ascribed national characteristics to the apparent controversy over the application of the theory to traffic patterns, calling Germans theoretical and Americans more practical, with a tendency to address problems head on and to resist a creative, nonlinear approach. This is puzzling because virtually all of the important work in dynamical systems theory and its applications has been done by Americans (Smale, Kaufman, Wolfram, and others).

Budiansky simply uncovered the difference between physicists, in this case German, and engineers, in this case American. Not surprisingly, the physicists are more theoretical.

Murray Cantor
Cambridge, Mass.

Perhaps gas-flow physics is mimicked and chaos will be better understood in the future from a theoretical standpoint as science marches on, but in the meantime, traffic congestion has readily identifiable causes. Perhaps the Germans are seeing chaos legitimately, because our engineers and legislators are not doing anything to break up randomness in our traffic-flow system. God (chaos) takes care of us.

Strong factors contributing to highway gridlock include poor attention to highway-intersection design and construction; driving rules that are intended to make our roads safer but that are relatively meaningless; stop signals that retard traffic flow and whose effects spill onto our interstate highway system; drivers who are incompetent, inattentive, or recalcitrant, and who refuse to keep up with traffic because of fear of getting a ticket, talking on a cell phone, age, and so forth. Such drivers force eighteen-wheelers into the center and left lanes of multi-lane highways, and block all traffic behind them, forming traffic-congestion

waves. This is the factor most neglected by traffic engineers and legislators.

I have driven extensively on American, British, and German roads, and I'm surprised that our federal Department of Transportation has not adopted the traffic roundabout—ubiquitous in the United Kingdom—as a major means of dealing with getting on and off freeways and with our major city-street and secondary-road intersections. Traffic moving under human brain control can deal with roundabout intersections better and more safely than with intersections regulated by robot traffic signals operated by clocks and pavement sensors, where we often see traffic stopped in all four directions for tens of seconds while drivers stare at each other waiting for the idiot light to change. As pointed out in your article, once traffic stops, it is hard to get it going and up to speed again. The British, by and large, have the best system, and other European countries are moving toward it.

Neil Letts
Hawthorne, Fla.

The Kept University

I write in regard to "The Kept University" (March, 2000, *Atlantic*), in which Eyal Press and Jennifer Washburn allege that "the New School for Social Research"—which has changed its name to New School University—"now hires unemployed Ph.D.s to design online courses, pays them a flat fee, and then requires them to sign away copyright so that the school can assign the course as they see fit."

The substance of this allegation is simply and completely untrue.

Of the more than 1,500 courses that have been offered through New School University's distance-learning program since its inception, in 1994, none has ever been taught by anyone other than the instructor who designed the course. All our courses are taught in a highly interactive environment by the university's regular faculty (some with graduate teaching assistants), and all faculty members are paid to teach every time, at the same rate that they are paid to teach the

course on campus. With few exceptions all online courses are simply additional sections of the same course—taught by the same instructor and covering the same material—as on campus. Our online classes enroll an average of ten students, with a cap of eighteen. Instructors are provided with free training, all the tools and technology required, and a tremendous amount of staff support in developing and offering their courses.

Stephen J. Anspacher
New School University
New York, N.Y.

Eyal Press and Jennifer Washburn reply:
Our source was Lora Taub, a former online instructor at the New School, whose story was chronicled in The Industry Standard in 1998. Taub reports that during a two-year period when she worked as a faculty member at the New School's online university, she taught exclusively online, never in a regular classroom. In the spring of 1998, Taub says, her classes were abruptly terminated, but when Taub requested that the New School grant her access to her course

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materials from its online archives, in part to prevent them from being assigned to other instructors without her consent, the university did not respond. Taub does not believe that her contract specified who held the rights to the courses she developed (even though copyright traditionally resides with the faculty member), and indeed, copies of the university's current contracts for online courses make no reference to course ownership, which in Taub's case had the effect of leaving the university in control.

Taub is hardly alone in fearing that schools may reuse online courses after the professors who designed them depart. The American Association of University Professors in 1999 published a statement affirming that faculty members should be allowed to "exercise control over the future use and distribution" of electronic courses, since distance learning makes it possible that "syllabus, lectures, examinations, and other course materials may be copied or recorded and reused without the teacher's presence."

Stephen Anspacher recently told us that online instructors—who include "independent contractors" and "part-time" faculty

members, according to the university's contracts—are paid a flat fee of \$2,000 to \$5,000 per course, far less than full-time professors receive at his and most other universities. Mr. Anspacher says that none of the New School's online classes "has ever been taught by anyone other than the instructor who designed the course," but the best way to secure that commitment would be for the university to adopt a policy whereby professors generally retain the copyright to online course content—which some schools, Columbia among them, have recently done.

Advice & Consent

Jeanne Schinto ("Obscure Objects of Lapsed Desire," December *Atlantic*) raises a thoughtful and disturbing point in her excellent article. It seems that a lot of the art collected by individuals and institutions is doomed to rot in storage, not because it isn't good art but because the artists are obscure. I hope, though, that not too many people take her up on her suggestion of "recycling" or "ceremonial incinerating" unwanted art. Remem-

ber the case of El Greco, who was all but forgotten for nearly 300 years after his death. When he was rediscovered, in the twentieth century, collectors descended on his home town of Toledo to buy up his paintings. The prices they offered seem scandalously low today, but the owners of those family heirlooms were more than willing to part with them.

Artists come in and out of fashion like hemlines and lapels. Future generations may wonder what we saw in Jean-Michel Basquiat and Eric Fischl, and may bid astronomically on the works of Jo Hopper and Friedel Dzubas, appalled that the Whitney discarded some of Jo Hopper's work, even if it was "unworthy." Art that was once hot and goes out of fashion is also worth hanging on to. Consider the case of William Bouguereau. Rich and famous in his prime, he was despised and ridiculed even before his death, nearly a century ago, and is only now enjoying a revival. Love him or hate him, but please don't "recycle" him.

Tom Quinn
Spokane, Wash.

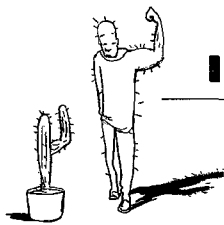
Overall Morningstar Ratings™ for risk-adjusted performance as of 12/31/00¹

Fund	Overall	3 yr	5 yr	10 yr
Tax-Free Short Intermediate	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Tax-Free Intermediate	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	—
Tax-Free Income	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Tax-Free High Yield	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
California Bond	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Florida Intermediate	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	—
Georgia Bond	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	—
Maryland Bond	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Maryland Short	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	—
New Jersey Bond	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	—
New York Bond	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Virginia Bond	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	—
Summit Municipal Income	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	—
Summit Municipal Intermediate	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	—

The funds were rated among 1,722; 1,479; and 443 municipal bond funds for the 3-, 5-, and 10-year periods ended 12/31/00, respectively.

receive 4 stars, the next 35% receive 3 stars, the next 22.5% receive 2 stars, and the bottom 10% receive 1 star. The Overall Morningstar Rating for a fund is derived from a weighted average of the performance figures associated with its 3-, 5-, and 10-year (if applicable) Morningstar Rating metrics. Each fund is rated exclusively against U.S.-domiciled municipal bond funds. For more information, including fees, expenses, and risks, read the fund profile or prospectus carefully before investing. T. Rowe Price Investment Services, Inc. Distributor.

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INNOCENT BYSTANDER

FINE POINTS

Is accuracy overrated?

BY CULLEN MURPHY

.....

One of the unremarked characteristics of the dispute last fall over a “full, fair, and accurate” count of the presidential ballots cast in Florida is the extent to which the idea of accuracy itself has come to occupy the status of a primal good—joining prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude as the fifth cardinal virtue (maybe the only one left). Presidential politics aside, the frontiers of accuracy have recently registered advances in a variety of directions. The initial layout of the Great Pyramid at Giza, it turns out, can now be dated more accurately than ever before—to about 2478 B.C.—because it appears to have been precisely aligned in accordance with a particular astronomical configuration. The average normal temperature of the human body was not long ago recalibrated to 98.2°, replacing the traditional 98.6°, and last year researchers in the United States and Canada, making use of a computer-controlled Thermal Manikin Head in a wind tunnel, proposed long-overdue adjustments to the formula for the wind-chill factor. In 1999 the official height of Mount Everest was adjusted upward by seven feet (to 29,035 feet), and the summit was moved slightly to the northeast.

Issues of accuracy arise everywhere. At the service entrance of my office building a Muslim man folds himself into an attitude of prayer. Is he aware, I wonder, of the controversy over the correct qibla from North America—that is, the direction in which the devout should be oriented in order to be facing Mecca? (Some Muslims favor the southeast, but according to the magazine *Islamic Horizons*, spherical trigonometry

suggests a northeasterly direction.) Is he aware of how the exactitudes of astronomical and atmospheric science have altered and even made irrelevant the traditional practice of “moonsighting” to detect the precise end of Ramadan?

During the past hundred years or so, according to the authors of *The First Measured Century*, a companion volume to a recent PBS documentary, Ameri-



cans made themselves into “the most energetic measurers” in history: “Numerical thinking became the discourse of public life.” Needless to say, all of us would agree that a substantial amount of accuracy, numerical and otherwise, is in the broader social interest. During NATO’s 1999 war against Yugoslavia, the inability to locate the address No. 2 Bulevar Umetnosti, in Belgrade, caused three precision-guided bombs to miss a Yugoslav military installation and slam into the Chinese embassy. A failure by scientists at NASA

and the Lockheed Martin Corporation to convert certain calculations from the English measurement system into the metric system resulted in the loss of the \$125 million *Mars Climate Orbiter* spacecraft. In 1996 an error in the transcription of an interview conducted by a writer for *The New Yorker* caused the commentator William Bennett to be quoted as saying of Patrick

Buchanan’s political views, “it’s a real S & M kind of thing,” whereas Bennett had actually said, “it’s a real us-and-them kind of thing.” At about the same time, a woman in Redding, California, noticed that she didn’t have enough ketchup to put in her meat loaf—leading to the discovery of a slight underfilling of certain bottles (the inadvertent result of a new design) and the payment by the H. J. Heinz Company of \$180,000 in civil penalties. Heinz last year also agreed to add some 10 million ounces of ketchup to its overall output, in tiny incre-

ments per bottle, in order to remedy past shortfalls.

But when does the quest for accuracy become overbearing? Almost everyone can now own instruments pinpointing his or her exact location on the planet with reference to the satellite-based Global Positioning System. Even cattle are linked to the GPS: so-called cow-whisperer devices, attached to collars, convey recorded instructions (“gee,” “haw”) and enable ranchers to move herds among remote

ILLUSTRATION BY GREG CLARKE

pasturelands. The accuracy of IQ as a gauge of intelligence may be debated, but IQ has nonetheless been joined by Technology Quotient, Anger Quotient, Happiness Quotient, Sexual Quotient, Emotional Quotient, and a host of other indices. The pursuit of accuracy becomes more and more particular. A study reported in *The New England Journal of Medicine* suggests that, other variables being constant, the metabolic expenditure of continual gum-chewing during all waking hours will in the course of a year bring about a five-kilogram reduction in body weight. Now that the accuracy of genetic evidence in proving guilt or innocence is beyond dispute, DNA-sampling kits may become a staple of personal hardware. A device called Defender-DNA is already being advertised:

Should the perpetrator come within reach, the slightest jab will activate the alarm, expose the pin under the retractable cover and cause [a] tiny collection probe to pierce the attacker's skin, gathering an identifying DNA sample.

To be sure, familiar figures of speech continue to expose a lack of accuracy to censure: "Close enough for government work." "Close doesn't count except in horseshoes and hand grenades." "Close, but no cigar." The online newsmonger Matt Drudge has been ridiculed by some media critics for stating that his reports are "80 percent accurate." And yet there are times when strict accuracy is actually undesirable. The extra leg in Picasso's *Paul en Arlequin* is an essential part of the painting's appeal. The poems of Shakespeare and Donne are filled with inept rhymes that brook no improvement. In typography the size of some letters must often be crafted slightly "wrong" in order to look "right." Translators resort to inaccuracy all the time: In *Play It Again, Sam*, Woody Allen tells Diane Keaton that he was thinking of Willie Mays while they were having sex; I saw the movie in France, where the subtitle rendered "Willie Mays" as "Pélé." Accuracy in music may be unusually subjective, but one critic I know believes that the singer Betty Carter had such perfect pitch that she could always be a quarter-tone sharp

just for effect. Labored accuracy is no ideal: There's a story about Thelonious Monk's impatiently ordering a musician, "Don't be perfect!"

We are cautious these days, fastidious, hedging claims with phrases like "plus or minus" and "margin of error." And yet it was confident inaccuracy that sent Columbus on his voyage of discovery; a better grasp of reality would have kept him home. Pope Alexander VI was working completely in the dark when he promulgated a Line of Demarcation, dividing the New World between Spain and Portugal before South America had even been discovered—an act that ensured that the future would one day enjoy not only Ibrahim Ferrer but also Bebel Gilberto. In the realm of sports, referees and umpires make inaccurate calls all the time; the vein-bulging test of wills that may ensue is aesthetically far more satisfying than any videotape-replay decree. Inaccuracy can bring immortality with an assurance that accuracy often fails to muster. William H. "Red" Friesell went on to become a successful real-estate agent, but he knew in 1940 that the lead paragraph in his obituary would identify him as the referee who mistakenly gave Cornell a fifth down and a victory over Dartmouth.

The truth is, we don't know how much accuracy we really want (or can stand). The Parthenon and all the statuary of ancient Greece were once painted in bright colors. Don't they look a lot better now? A few months ago it was discovered that some of the most memorable prime-ministerial radio speeches of World War II were given not by Winston Churchill but by the actor Norman Shelley, who sometimes served as Churchill's radio voice. Well, fine. An unfortunate Notre Dame fan made the news several years ago when he sued after a tattoo artist indelibly etched the misspelling "Fighting Irish" on his arm. Do we truly wish that this had never happened? Ordinary language is peppered with phrases that give all of us license to take liberties and indulge in blatant self-contradiction: "Be that as it may ..." "At the same time ..." "Even so ..." "Having said that ..." Nowadays most reputable newspapers put aside a

few inches every day to confess error; I suspect, however, that what most readers take away from such columns is not appreciation for the retrospective accuracy but gratitude for the original mistake. Here is a notice that appeared last year in *The (London) Observer*:

In the *Review's* special summer reading issue of 2 July we wrongly ascribed a reading list to Roddy Doyle, the celebrated Irish author. Unfortunately, owing to a misunderstanding, the 'Roddy Doyle' we spoke to, and who gave us a very interesting selection of summer reading, was a computer engineer from north London.

Desiderius Erasmus indulged a certain amount of skepticism about the human capacity to get to the bottom of things with any accuracy at all. In his *Praise of Folly* he took on scholars and divines and their endless explorations of branches of learning that seemed only to "torment the wits of man." Speaking in the personified voice of Folly, Erasmus urged the rest of us not to lose any sleep over this.

Now I believe I can hear the philosophers protesting that it can only be misery to live in folly, illusion, deception, and ignorance. But it isn't—it's human. I don't see why they call it a misery when you're all born, formed, and fashioned in this pattern, and it's the common lot of all mankind. There's no misery about remaining true to type.

Erasmus was only kidding, of course, more or less. He didn't believe that ignorance was bliss, but he did appreciate how the zealous pursuit of one form of knowledge can blind us to another.

Once, at a Little League game, I was press-ganged into calling balls and strikes, after a competent authority failed to show up. With radarlike precision I calibrated the target zone and assessed each incoming pitch. My eye was unerring, my concentration intense. Soon the count stood at three and two. The pitcher eyed his quarry, went into the wind-up, and threw. My strike-zone telemetry signaled low and outside, and permitted one verdict only. I told the batter to take his base.

From a score of spectators came a single observation: "But he swung and missed!" ▀

NOTES & DISPATCHES

TOKYO

THE KAMIKAZES RISE AGAIN

*This time, to help Japan
confront its past*

.....

Quietly, unnoticed by foreign or even local media, the kamikaze pilots of World War II are edging back into Japanese consciousness. For the rest of us, of course, they never went away. "Kamikaze"—literally, "divine wind," and originally a poetic name for a typhoon that scattered a Mongol fleet trying to invade Japan in 1281—is one of the few Japanese words firmly in the world's vocabulary. The young men, barely out of school, who crashed flimsy planes loaded with explosives onto U.S. and Allied warships have haunted nightmares for half a century, as did the shivering shopkeepers and bank clerks who went over the top to certain death in the previous world war. The kamikazes didn't save Japan from defeat, but the 2,200 or so who died trying did sink thirty-four warships, and some of them killed almost 5,000 sailors in and around Okinawa—the heaviest loss in any single battle in which the U.S. Navy took part. It's hard to forget enemies like them.

In Japan, however, a national amnesia has blotted out the years from 1931 to 1945. Only the sketchiest history of the war is taught; my children, who attended Japanese schools, had not heard of the kamikazes, or even of the "Special Attack Corps," the official military title for the suicide pilots. There has long been a small kamikaze memorial in the old samurai town of Chiran, on the southern tip of the island of Kyushu, which held the runway from which the pilots took off. But Chiran is an out-of-the-way place, not featured on any tourist itinerary. Last September I revisited it, only because an American friend

wanted to see the area his father, a Marine Corps veteran, might have been sent to invade had Japan not surrendered. To my surprise, the memorial had doubled in size since my previous visit, ten years ago, and it was crowded with visitors, all Japanese. A few of them were grizzled veterans, but most were young people, learning about the kamikazes for the first time.

A more accessible barometer of Japanese attitudes toward war is the Yasukuni Shrine, in the middle of Tokyo, on a hill overlooking the Emperor's palace. Yasukuni is, very approximately, Japan's Arlington National Cemetery, where the names of some 2.4 million soldiers and sailors who died in Japan's wars (and a handful whom the Allies hanged as war criminals) are recorded. Considering its purpose, Yasukuni is strangely unmilitary. Two rows of flowering cherry trees, magnificent in their short bloom (like the lives of fallen warriors, the Japanese say), lead to a weathered wooden shrine whose drawn purple curtains display the chrysanthemum crest of the emperors for whom those millions died. White-robed Shinto priests and priestesses bustle around on mysterious errands; gray-haired veterans, reunited on the anniversary of some long-ago battle or ship's sinking, pose in precise military formation for photographs. Visitors buy curios and feed flocks of specially bred white doves. For the most part, Yasukuni looks like its name—"The Empire at Peace."

Off to one side, however, is a substantial Western-style building called the Hall for Communing With Noble Souls—in plain-

er terms, a military museum. I recently escorted another American friend there. Steam Locomotive C5631, the first locomotive to travel the infamous Burma Railroad, was still on the grounds outside; that day a squad of old soldiers was scrubbing its smart black-and-red paint. A bilingual sign, familiar to me from previous visits, dedicates the locomotive "to memory of numerous casualties during the Railway construction works in war time" and includes a prayer "for the repose of their souls and for eternal world peace." Opposite, however, was something new: a statue of a proud young pilot, the earflaps of his flying helmet jauntily askew. It was dedicated, in an untranslated inscription, to "The Brave Men Who Made the Special Attack(s)," or, as the phrase might be more colloquially rendered, "The Unknown Kamikaze." This is the first statue at Yasukuni of any World War II fighter—previously there were only figures of a horse, a war dog, and a soldier's widow with her three children.

Inside, the museum looked much as ever, although Emperor Hirohito—a



nonperson there until his death, in 1989—is gradually emerging, his role in Japan’s wars now cautiously acknowledged by a painting of him leading troops to this very shrine. The museum has guns, warship models, a one-man Japanese suicide submarine “loaned for an indefinite period from the US Army museum Hawaii,” a shot-up tank, a diorama of an attack by rocket-powered, human-guided bombs. The sole surprise was a sign, in Japanese only, directing visitors to the “Words of the Fallen Heroes” on the upper floor; it bore a photograph of a young navy officer cradling a baby in his arms.

The room upstairs was simple, even stark. The walls were lined with photographs of handsome kamikaze pilots, forever young and smiling. In glass cases beneath were their farewell letters to their families and the dates of their missions. Sad music, including the Japanese equivalent of “Taps,” sounded softly.

The letter of Pilot Officer Masahisa Uemura to his daughter Motoko—the pair in the photograph on the sign—is heartrending. Uemura, who died somewhere in the Pacific on October 26, 1944, at the age of twenty-six, wrote,

I want you to respect your mother and be like her, always honest and kind. I hope you will be a good wife. I won’t see you again in this life, so when you want to see me, you should come to the Yasukuni Shrine. If you pray hard enough, I will be there beside you, and share your happiness as my own. Never say you have no father. I will always be with you, by your side. Your loving Daddy.

His schoolboy cap lies beside his letter.

Lieutenant Yoshie Miyauchi, aged twenty-three, who died on April 28, 1945, near Okinawa, wrote, “Dear Mother and Father—thank you for bringing me up to be a true man. I died smiling, so please smile. Do not cry for me.”

Ensign Takamitsu Nishida, aged twenty-two, who died in the southwest Pacific on May 11, 1945, wrote his parents, “I attack in four hours. I shall be shining among the clouds, drifting and tumbling forever. This is my last letter. Your loving son.”

Not all the letters are from pilots. A

beautiful army nurse, Kyoko Yamano, aged nineteen, who died “of a war disease” in the Philippines in 1945, wrote to her parents, “The sun is setting over the south seas as I write. It is beautiful here, but I would rather be home in Japan with my dear family.”

There are last messages from nine girl telephone operators who killed themselves to avoid capture by the Soviets on Sakhalin Island, which until 1945 was partly held by the Japanese, and from schoolboys drafted into war work. Nothing indicates what enemy losses their sacrifices might have achieved, or that most of them were dealing out death as well as suffering it—but the same might be said of the Vietnam War memorial in Washington, or of any such memorial or cemetery anywhere. Many of the letters use the stilted patriotic phrases of the time; none express hatred for the enemy. The dominant theme—for me, at least—was the waste of young lives and the pity of war.

An old soldier with a long wispy beard asked me to sign the visitor’s book. I gladly complied. The book is a fascinating exhibit in its own right, a dialogue among Japanese and those foreigners who have strayed in. “I am eighty-three and still alive,” wrote one Japanese veteran. “I can only respect what they did.” “I know so little about the war,” wrote a seventeen-year-old Japanese girl. “I’m glad I came.” “Stay proud,” urged Jossie and May, of Australia. “Where’s the other side of the story?” asked Vincent, of Hong Kong. “I’m fascinated by the presentation of imperialist aggressors as heroes,” wrote Daniel, of New York. “My old granddad’s brother was killed in a Japanese camp,” wrote Dave, of Liverpool. “Don’t glorify war please.” Beneath his comment was one in Japanese: “Foreigners don’t understand what this display is about.”

What *is* it about? I was reminded of two strangers I once heard arguing on a bus in New York. “Lee surrendered, didn’t he?” one sneered. I thought of the statues of Confederate soldiers I had seen in dusty southern towns and cities, the persistent controversy about the Confederate flag, the fact that the first suicide submariners were Americans—the crew of the iron coffin CSS *Hunley*,

who died sinking the USS *Housatonic* off Charleston in 1864. The Japanese and southern dilemmas are much the same: how to honor brave men and women without endorsing the cause for which they died. —MURRAY SAYLE

SILICON VALLEY

FORGET THE YELLOWFIN

How much does a company’s culture really contribute to its success?

.....

Over the past twenty years the United States has enjoyed successive booms of light, clean, “interesting” industry. First came semiconductors (epitomized by Intel), then personal computers (Apple and Compaq), and then software (Microsoft). Until recently the Internet and communications in general were booming, epitomized by Amazon.com and AOL. Next up: further pharmaceutical and biotech wonders.

During those twenty years the prevailing way of talking and writing about business achievement shifted in a correspondingly light, clean, interesting direction—with less emphasis on details of production and distribution, and more fascination with the “culture” of a company as the root of failure or success. For a long time I happily went along with this trend, both in what I chose to read about companies and in what I noticed and sometimes wrote about them. But as I’ve watched the ups and downs of the Internet-and-venture-capital complex that is based in the San Francisco area, I’ve started to have some doubts.

It isn’t often that one can trace a decades-long intellectual shift to a single book, but in this case the connection is inescapable. The change in business analysis began with *In Search of Excellence*, by Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman Jr., which was published in 1982 and has sold some three million copies since. Although the authors had both been consultants at McKinsey & Company, the book they wrote departed radically from the dry, sanitized tone of most consulting documents. Peters and Waterman identified forty-three large American companies that exemplified

“excellent” practice; they told real stories, with real names and dates and inside details, to illustrate how those companies made their choices and did their work; and they extracted eight broad themes that, they said, distinguished a successful company, whether it made blue jeans (Levi Strauss), airplanes (Boeing), or candy (Mars). Some of these themes, such as “a bias for action” and sticking “close to the customer,” have become such staples of discussion about business that it’s startling to realize that the terms were coined only twenty years ago.

There were many reasons for the vast ripple effects of the book, including Tom Peters’s tremendous gifts as a proselytizer and a showman. Journalists took naturally to the concept and message, which resembled and seemed to validate what journalists themselves do. We have long been accustomed to judging, say, a government agency or a political campaign by details of its “culture”—how committed underlings are to the larger goal, how much time and energy power struggles consume—and the book suggested that we could look at companies in a similar way. I first read *In Search of Excellence* after an unforgettable business-reporting experience. I had spent a week in Detroit, in midwinter, listening to auto-company executives snarl about labor and labor leaders snarl back—and then I went to Silicon Valley. There, in the balmy sunshine, I interviewed people at Hewlett-Packard and Intel and the relatively young Apple. They were full of theories about how every member of a company had to share in its success. At General Motors, Roger Smith, the head of the company, worked in an enormous top-floor office with knee-deep carpeting; at Intel, Andrew Grove and Gordon Moore, two of the company’s founders, toiled in cubicles alongside everyone else. No wonder these new companies were thriving! When I came across Peters and Waterman’s book, soon afterward, I felt as if I’d found the explanatory key to what I had observed.

It’s hardly the case, of course, that other means of business analysis have disappeared in the years since *Excellence* was published. The business pages still contain articles about distribution issues

and product placement. The rise of spreadsheet programs in the mid-1980s inaugurated the age of “quants” (analysts who judge companies strictly by the numbers), and vastly more-powerful computers have since made the financial markets quant heaven. But the cultural approach still plays a large role in the way in which people write about business and, even more important, the way in which many people in business understand their companies and themselves.



Nowhere has this been truer than in the Internet economy—and nowhere are the limitations of the cultural approach more evident at the moment. I was reminded of this late last year, when I visited the headquarters of Google, the designer of the hottest Internet search engine. At a time of general gloom amid dot-com start-ups, many of which were going under, Google was a cheerful exception. It was founded in 1998 by two graduate students at Stanford, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, who set up operations in a friend’s house. (They moved some desks and computers to the garage and took pictures of themselves working there, so that they could claim to have started the company in a garage—the tech world’s equivalent of “born in a log cabin.”) By the end of last year the company had nearly 200 employees, conducted 60 million searches a day, and was winning every award

in sight for the precision, speed, and convenience of its searches. It even claimed to be close to making money, by licensing its technology to others and by selling ads.

To visit Google’s headquarters, in a modest office park in Mountain View, was to take a trip down memory lane. The Googleplex, as it is known among employees (“Googlers”), is the best extant example of what the outside world thinks a dot-com should look like—and is the way scores of companies did look back in the palmy days of early 1999. An on-staff masseuse. Saunas in the men’s and women’s bathrooms. Lava lamps everywhere, in the bright primary colors of the Google logo. A celebrity chef making free meals all day long—yellowfin tuna and five-spice tofu for lunch the day I was there.

What struck me most was the way Google executives explained the loving and lavish atmosphere—as a crucial component of the company’s success. We need to make it feel like a family, they said. We want smart people to *want* to work here. Google’s culture makes Google strong.

I’m sure these things do have an effect—but perhaps not to the degree the Googlers believe. It’s conceivable that the food and friendliness helped to attract the engineers who refined Google’s search technology. The heart of that technology, though, is what Page and Brin designed in their friend’s house: a far superior tool for indexing and finding information on the Web, compared with what AltaVista, Yahoo!, and others had devised. Google’s system for locating information combines several well-established search techniques, such as keyword indexing, which finds occurrences of particular words or terms, and the use of a directory to organize information into an encyclopedia-style taxonomy, with its own new methods. The most important is a sort of reputational ranking, which evaluates information on a Web site according to how many other sites include links to it and how important and reliable those other sites are. Thus, unlike the many start-ups whose “innovation” was simply a different business model—Let’s sell toothpaste, but *on the*

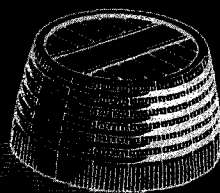
Internet!—Google had an innovation, rooted in new technology, that constituted a genuine change from what was available elsewhere.

In addition, as Larry Page was careful to point out, the company has been frugal about expenses that have undone other start-ups. For instance, although numerous Internet ventures have spent millions of dollars on TV ads and other “branding” efforts of questionable effectiveness, Google has never bought a big, showy ad; it arranges its publicity through barter. To cite just one example, Google runs Web searches for *The Washington Post*’s Web site; the *Post* runs print and online ads for Google.

Over the past three years more or less every start-up has said the same thing Google has about the role its corporate culture would play. We’ll succeed because our people can bring their dogs to work. We’ll succeed because they love our beach parties and trips to Yosemite. We’ll succeed because we bring them free dinner every evening and outfit each office with an Aeron chair. Most of those companies eventually failed—and even when they were succeeding, the reasons had less to do with corporate culture than with fundamental economics. What really gave the dot-com start-ups their pizzazz in 1996 and 1997 was not the coolness of their founders but the piled-up stock-market gains from the previous few years. Venture capitalists had to put that money somewhere, and the Internet was the most attractive place. What kept the boom going for a few more years was not the presumed brilliance of twentysomethings with a vision or the atmospheres they created but an optimism among money managers about how much room there was for another AOL or another eBay—that is, another company that could define and then dominate a market niche. The bubble burst in the middle of last year, when the money managers decided that there were not enough niches available, at least not at the moment, and that the cost of finding them was too high. The yellowfin in Google’s cafeteria was an emblem less of success that came from a pampered, happy work force than of the pampering and happiness made possible by success. —JAMES FALLOWS

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PANAMA

THE FORGOTTEN HIGHWAY

Why you still can't drive from the top of the Americas to the bottom

.....

Panama's image abroad is defined by the Panama Canal, which the United States formally handed over to Panama at the end of 1999. But the Isthmus of Panama is also a land bridge, linking North and South America. Oddly, the foreign powers that dominated the country—first Spain, then France, and then the United States—neglected to build a route that would open this land bridge to traffic. Today Panama has no highway or railroad running its entire length. The so-called Pan-American Highway, a hemispheric network of roads that includes our national highway system and those of other countries, has only one missing link from end to end—in Panama's unruly 6,400-square-mile eastern border province of Darién.

By the early 1960s it was possible to drive on a continuous road from the Arctic Circle in Alaska to the southern part of Central America, and then from the northernmost fingers of the Andes to Tierra del Fuego. Darién remained untouched, its swampy terrain hardly mapped. By the end of the decade, however, reconnaissance teams and engineers anticipated that the construction of a road could be finished in ten years. Work on the Darién highway began.

Then planners in the U.S. government, which was providing most of the funding for the highway, became concerned about an ugly issue that had somehow gotten little attention. Opening the Panama-Colombia border would mean exposing Panama, and eventually the countries to the north, to foot-and-

mouth disease, the scourge of the South American cattle industry. North and Central America had eradicated foot-and-mouth at great cost. Darién constituted a self-sustaining and highly effective barrier against a new outbreak. In 1975, when about half of the highway was finished, a U.S. judge blocked completion of the project, citing the foot-and-mouth problem, among other concerns. Three years later Washington let the project die.

In the years since the United States withdrew support, political obstacles to completing the highway have increased, especially in Panama. Most Panamanians are mestizo, and harbor mixed feelings about Darién, the majority of whose residents are black or Indian and retain strong cultural ties with Colombia. Thinly populated and nearly impenetrable, because of its steep coastal mountains and exuberant rain forest, Darién is an attractive refuge for drug traffickers and guerrillas. The discovery of a cocaine laboratory in Darién in 1984 became a key part of the case the United States later built against Panama's military leader, Manuel Noriega, because of his connections to the Medellín cartel. In 1993 three American missionaries were kidnapped from a remote Indian village in the province, reportedly by Colombian rebels; to date no one knows what has become of them. Four years ago, and then again last October, Darién was swept by Colombian death squads hunting for rebel sympathizers. Panama's police force is reluctant to enter some areas of the province.

Isolation and a wretched infrastructure may be contributing to Darién's lawlessness, but they have also been keeping Colombia's chronic violence at a safe distance from the western part of Panama, where 95 percent of Panamanians live. The difficulty of traversing the province works against another in-

trusion: immigration from the south. Isolation has also helped to preserve Darién's old-growth rain forest to some extent and has allowed Indian tribes who do not want to be integrated with the outside world to remain separate. Panamanians like to say that Darién is *abandonado*, and although they express concern about its social problems, most of them prefer that the province remain essentially as it is: a buffer zone.

The northern half of the Pan-American Highway ends at a small inland village called Yaviza, on a high riverbank just fifty-one miles from Colombia. The distance from Yaviza to Panama City is only 165 miles, yet it feels much farther by car. The stretch of highway that crawls through Darién is not at all like the part that comes into Panama City from the north. Most of it is unpaved, and near Yaviza, it is little more than a mud slick.

Yaviza, though a prominent dot on maps of Panama, is not much bigger than a football field. Indians and black descendants of colonial-era slaves crowd into the few narrow streets; their shacks rise on stilts above the soggy, trash-covered ground. The village holds a crumbling Spanish fort but otherwise reveals little of its age. In this climate, where an inch of rain can fall in an hour, visual distinctions between old and new are blurred. Houses start rotting as soon as they are built.

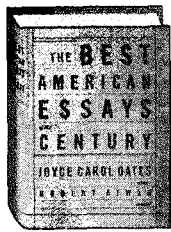
The look of tropical decay conceals a tenacity that has kept Yaviza alive for almost 400 years, through a series of mini-booms separated by epochs of stagnation. In Spanish times Yaviza was a trading town, a place where two heavily traveled rivers intersected and people came to cash in on a harvest of plantains, some recently panned gold, or a felled mahogany tree. Today, despite its connection to the outside world, Yaviza is still only a trading post. If there has been any change in the twenty or so years since the highway arrived, it is a slight rise in cocaine and weapons dealing with Colombians.

Still, if Yaviza has not been transformed by the highway, other parts of Darién have. Since the late 1970s an epic migration of peasants from the western parts of Panama has broken the land-

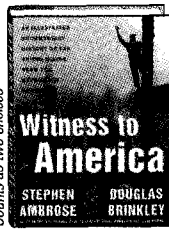
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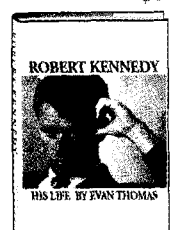
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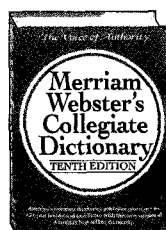
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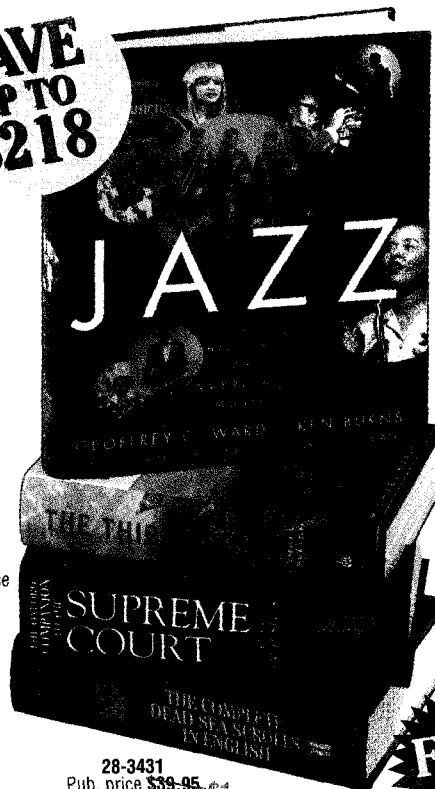


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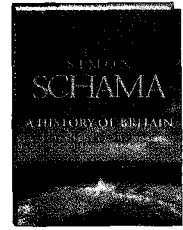


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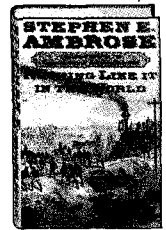
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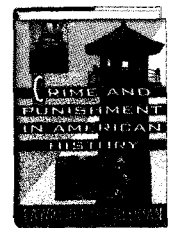
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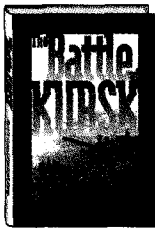
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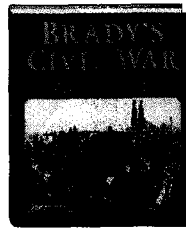
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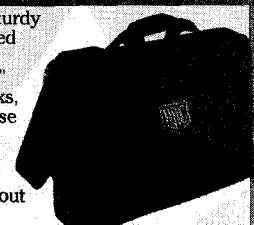


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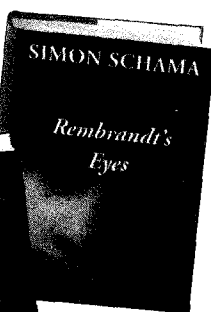
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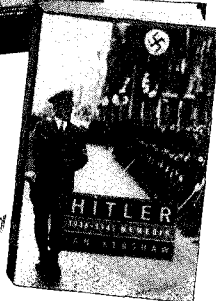
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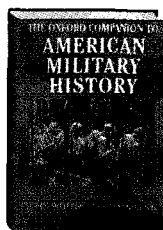
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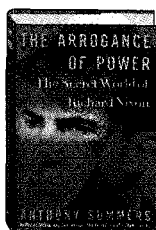
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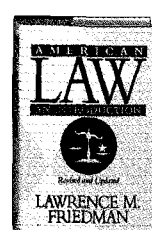
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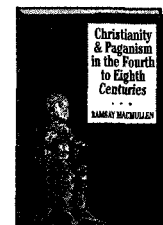
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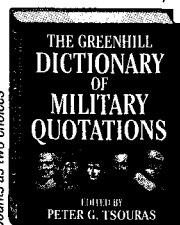
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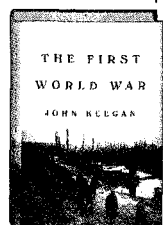
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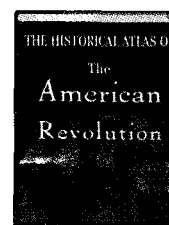
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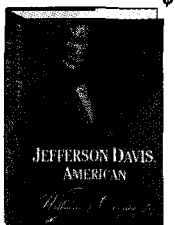
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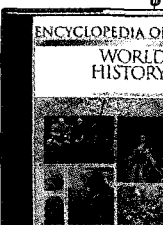
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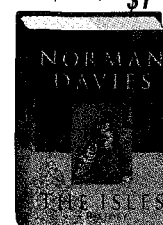
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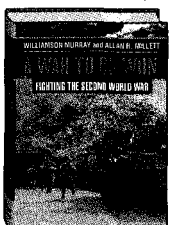
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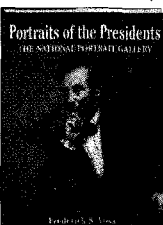
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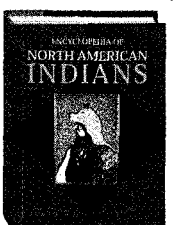
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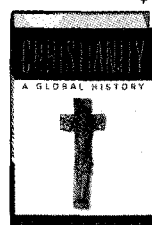
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scape open. Cattle ranching and high-yield agriculture have arrived, bringing drab, parched fields and the omnipresent haze of brush-clearing fires. The rain forest, which used to cover an area nearly twice the size of Yellowstone National Park, has retreated mainly to mountainsides and private reserves. The only remaining large chunk of lowland jungle stands in the corridor between Yaviza and Colombia, which is exactly where the highway has yet to go.

Finishing the highway may not be what Panama wants, but the highway may, in a sense, finish itself. Open land has started to run out in western Darién, so peasants—along with their cattle—are migrating toward Colombia, where foot-and-mouth disease remains

a problem. Meanwhile, modern communities are taking shape along the highway. The government, under pressure from the peasants, has announced that it will begin paving the road to Yaviza. And a network of pioneer roads has already begun to snake from Yaviza toward the border.

Frontiers do not, except in a rhetorical sense, disappear overnight. They break apart slowly, season by season, harvest by harvest, generation by generation. For twenty years it has been abundantly clear that Darién's forest was breaking up. Perhaps the only constant in Darién is a sense of historical irony—all the wasted effort to finish the highway, and now the futility of trying to hold it back. —BENJAMIN RYDER HOWE

LOS ANGELES

THE HOLLYWOOD FOREVER WAY OF DEATH

*Digital immortality—
and not just for the stars*

.....

As a counselor at Hollywood Forever, a sixty-four-acre cemetery abutting Paramount Studios, Ilania Hofler had guided Maurice Mills's survivors through the logistical and emotional difficulties of interment. She personally delivered the death certificate for Mills, a forty-four-year-old African-American telecommunications-equipment installer, to his parents' home. At the funeral service she made sure that all the guests signed the registry. Three weeks later, with the family again gathered around her, Hofler assumed a new mantle—that of the deceased's multimedia biographer.

With a few manipulations of her Sony Mavica camera Hofler uploaded fifteen photos of Maurice, dating from infancy to a few years back, into the cemetery's digital archives. "Now comes the good part," she said. Setting up a microphone, she advised the family to reminisce without worrying about the two-minute time limit that would apply to each person's contribution. The cemetery's production editors would take care of the trimming. "We're not stingy around here," she said. "We'd rather edit it than miss the punch line."

The first person to know Maurice was, of course, his mother, so Hofler began with her. For Florence Mills, it seemed an awesome task, even something of a burden, to have to talk into the recorder about her son's quirks, beliefs, and ambitions. A black-and-white photo trembled in her fingers; she read her memories haltingly from notes on the back of an envelope. "He would like to get out of the stroller," she said, looking at the photo, which shows Maurice as a toddler. "He wanted to get down and get going."

And so Maurice did, walking at nine months, chasing livestock on his grandfather's Alabama farm as a child, tooling around Los Angeles on his motor scooter in junior high, speeding away with his mechanic's tools to rescue broken-down taxis as a young man, selling used Cadillacs, earning a technical degree. After Florence Mills and Maurice's father, Willie J. Mills, narrated all this motion, Joyce Jones, the mother of Maurice's first two children, found herself staring down at a snapshot of Maurice—at the time of the photo a beautiful stranger—sitting in a maroon Grand Prix. "He drove up,"

Jones remembered, "and I'm like, 'Look at this handsome guy looking at me ... Maybe he's interested in me.'" They started dating soon after. "I was young; I was seventeen, and he was eighteen. And I just remember this time of my life as being something that I'll never forget, like the first time I met Maurice."

Millions can meet Maurice now, in death—countless more than could ever have known him during a lifetime without notoriety or fame. Access to the wistful memories Hofler recorded is not limited to his survivors; anyone can find Maurice's life story online, at forevernetwork.com. Three centuries hence a social historian investigating the aspirations of African-American telecommunications workers in late-twentieth-century southern California might pull up Maurice's multimedia biography, part of which is set to the music of Heatwave.

After they've scrolled through Maurice's story, visitors to the site can move on to those of Rudolph Valentino, Cecil B. DeMille, and Douglas Fairbanks Sr. Like Maurice, these luminaries are buried in Hollywood Forever, which until recently was known as Hollywood Memorial Park. The name was changed by Tyler Cassity, who bought the cemetery in 1998, after it had declared bankruptcy. "Here, we're at the center of a virtual culture, a world that is made up of film and media and content," Cassity told me late last year. "Such a high proportion of the people here have content-rich afterlives."

Cassity, who is thirty-one, is mining this rich material to make multimedia narratives not just of Hollywood Forever's elite occupants but also, eventually, of every person who finally comes to rest there. To date, some 1,500 Hollywood Forever biographies have been composed, most of them for people buried since Cassity took over. The celebrity biographies were written by professional historians Cassity hired for the purpose; the rest were put together by Hollywood Forever biographers with the help of surviving family members. Cassity's aim is to provide digital immortality, backed up on the cemetery's master tape and available for viewing in the facility's scattered interactive kiosks. "We need to find a new paradigm," Cassity said, "because

the old model is increasingly not fulfilling its purpose.”

An elaborate framework supported that old model: gargantuan flower arrangements; the ersatz religiosity of funeral directors; the solemn purring of organs; premium caskets of pure titanium, their lids propped open to display prettified cadavers—all the trappings that Jessica Mitford excoriated in *The American Way of Death* (1963). But Cassity has even more means at his disposal. The postmortem biographies he creates incorporate video, photographs, e-mail, Super 8 footage, answering-machine messages, and recorded testimonials—a far cry from the mute dash that alone separates birth and death dates on a tombstone. Cassity’s offerings range from a modest \$595 Album—the option selected by Maurice Mills’s survivors—to a \$4,195 Platinum package, which includes professional narration and a feature-length video.

Tyler Cassity is a scion of a St. Louis funeral-home-and-cemetery concern. However, his ambitions were always artistic. At the age of thirteen he began tape-recording his great-grandmother’s recollections, capturing the sauciness of her gossip, the timbre of her laugh. When he left for Columbia University, five years later, it was understood that his brother, Brent, would take over the business while Tyler pursued a literary calling.

Ensnared behind the mammoth desk in his office at the cemetery, surrounded by a library that includes *Death-ing*, by Anya Foos-Graber (1989); *Final Curtain*, by Margaret Burk (1996); *Yiddish Wisdom*, by Kristina Swarner (1996); and *City of Quartz* (1990), Mike Davis’s apocalyptic meditation on Los Angeles, Cassity recounted his journey back to the graveyard. He spoke in a hushed monotone; his bangs hung, like those of a 1920s prep-schooler, over liquid blue eyes. His suit, a more somber blue, bore the stamp of a tasteful, and expensive, designer.

“During my first twenty-eight years I wanted to be a writer,” Cassity said. After graduating from college he became the assistant to the executive director of PEN, an international organization of

writers. He wrote some stories, drawing mostly on the family business for material, until he determined that the audience for mortuary fiction was too small. “What I wanted was immortality,” Cassity recalled. Without mass acclaim there was no assurance against oblivion. “If you are one of the point-five percent that attains celebrity,” he said, “people will compile your biography with or without your consent, and if you create something to be seen and read, people will preserve it for you. But we have fewer and fewer rituals for celebrating the common life.”

When he bought Hollywood Memorial Park, Cassity could scarcely hide his



contempt for the established order of the cemetery business. “The industry has an amazing capacity not to look at what society is thinking,” he told me at the time. “It hasn’t had a major innovation for a century. We need to find a new paradigm. Digital cemeteries are my own conceptual answer.” Two years later the 2000 National Funeral Directors Association convention was abloom with digital wizardry, and Cassity now finds himself facing online competitors with names like PLAN4ever and HeavenlyDoor.com.

Cassity moved to Los Angeles in 1998. He has added a cemetery in Kansas City, Missouri, to his digital domain—which is called Forever Enterprises—and has secured a letter of intent that will enable him to buy eight cemeteries in greater Chicago and one in Minneapolis. He has dispatched film crews to document birth and the first months of infancy for parents who have pre-ordered the

recording of their children’s lives. He has Webcast two funeral services, during which far-flung friends and relatives of the deceased could chat online as they viewed the ceremony in real time. He sees Forever Enterprises as an explicitly literary as well as a mortuary venture. “If you log on to our Web site,” Cassity said, “you’ll see the great American novel being written every day. Only I don’t have to write it.”

The Hollywood Forever biographies recorded thus far are hardly ready to vie with *Moby-Dick*. Nevertheless, the myriad tales of the cemetery’s dead possess a cumulative resonance. As biographies of long-deceased movie stars and moguls are joined by those of Armenian, Latino, and Russian newcomers, the Forever archive reflects the changing demographics of the surrounding neighborhoods, now multi-ethnic districts with only tenuous ties to the movie industry—neighborhoods that accommodate not only the gilded mansions of Tyrone Power and Clark Gable but also the unpretentious home of Maurice Mills.

Toward the end of the recording session for the Mills family, Ilania Hoffer posed a question to Maurice’s daughter Alara. “If he were here for one brief moment,” Hoffer asked, “what message would he want to pass on to you?”

“That he’s on the other side pulling all the strings for me,” Alara answered, smiling through her sobs. “And not to worry about anything and keep smiling, because he’s my angel now.”

Hoffer switched off her digital recorder. “Finished,” Maurice’s Hollywood Forever biographer declared. “That was beautiful.” —ED LEIBOWITZ

WASHINGTON, D.C.

DON'T CALL US

Why the FBI isn't hiring black women

.....

Alethea Pittman wanted to be an FBI agent. She thought she was well qualified, having just received her law degree—exactly what the Bureau was looking for, according to its recruitment brochures. Diploma in hand, Pittman was ready to be sworn in and collect her badge.

I first spotted Pittman in a host of eager faces in her first-year class at the University of Alabama School of Law, when I was on campus recruiting applicants for the Bureau. I noticed her because she asked a lot of good questions. I kept in touch with her over the next three years when I visited the school, and I came to know her as a hardworking, diligent student of the law, clear-headed, sensible, and eloquent. She is also African-American.

I spent thirty years as an agent in the FBI, and I enjoyed it. I made arrests, did surveillance, handled SWAT operations and hostage rescues, worked undercover, and was immersed in Cold War intrigues, counterintelligence, and anti-terrorism. My last assignment had brought me to Alethea Pittman.

In 1994 I was chosen by Louis Freeh, the director of the FBI, as one of thirty-one agents nationwide to bring the next generation of agents into the Bureau. I became the chief recruiter for the state of Alabama, a job that lasted until my retirement, in 1999. I looked forward to the opportunity, but my enthusiasm turned to frustration as Freeh and his staff at headquarters refused to change policies that were hurting our recruitment of African-American women. Other recruiters shared my dismay. The Bureau began welcoming minorities and women in 1972, after the death of Director J. Edgar Hoover, who had opposed their hiring. In 1994 there were 7,405 white male agents, 1,053 white female agents, and 440 black male agents, but only seventy-nine black female agents.

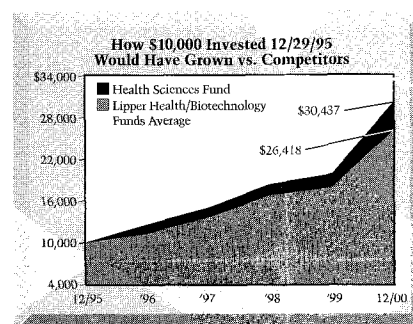
Freeh had made greater diversity in the ranks one of his goals when he became director, in 1993, but he left the method of accomplishing this to the head of the applicant unit, who, though a veteran agent, had no experience in recruitment at the field level and who believed that candidates should acquire work experience before applying. Prior to 1994 the Bureau had been interested in hiring lawyers as soon as they finished law school. Indeed, that was my path to a badge. But the FBI had turned away from the law schools, telling new J.D.s to go practice law for a while and then come back, perhaps around age thirty.

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Recruiters nationwide told the head of the applicant unit that his approach was costing the Bureau dearly in terms of bringing African-American women on board. He would not budge. The FBI could afford to be choosy, he said, and if applicants were sufficiently motivated to become agents, they would get the work experience and then apply. Thus the Bureau was losing out on perhaps the most talented and savvy pool of African-American women in the country. We were forfeiting the game without a fight.

In 1996 I met with Freeh to discuss hiring practices. I described Pittman to him, explaining that she had graduated from college with honors, earned a master's in public administration, and gone on to law school. I pointed out that she had been chosen by his Bureau, from thousands of applicants, to work for a summer as an honors intern at FBI headquarters. I stressed that we should hire her immediately after her graduation from law school.

We were in his office at headquarters, in Washington. Freeh listened and took notes. He bent over a yellow legal pad and wrote longhand in the fishhook style of left-handers. I said, "We're losing them—losing black women like Alethea Pittman if we don't hire them right out of law school, before they're snatched up by Wall Street firms and the best legal houses." He looked up at me and then returned to his pad.

"The FBI says it wants African-American women," I reminded Freeh. "We say we need them, but our actions don't bear that out. We exclude them. Whether we mean to or not, we do."

I stopped talking. Freeh put his pencil down and leaned back in the deep chair. "How would you fix it?" he asked after a moment. He studied me, waiting.

I told him again.

"But do we need more lawyers?" he asked. He was a lawyer. I was a lawyer. We eyed each other.

"No," I said. "But we do need the kinds of people who finish law school. They're survivors, intelligent, tenacious, energetic. Plus they have two skills the Bureau badly needs in its agents: they can speak well and write well."

Freeh thought this over. "What's wrong with making them practice law



before they become agents?" he asked.

"Everything," I said. "African-American women who graduate from law school are in demand. Everyone wants them. The Bureau has to grab them early, when they're single and can relocate, when our starting salary [\$45,000] is inviting, when the mystique of the FBI is still alluring. Not after they've proved their worth at a law firm and have fat bank accounts and children at the table. When their husbands have career obligations and can't be uprooted to move around the country."

Freeh nodded in agreement. He looked back down at his pad but did not write anything. He seemed deep in thought.

Someone knocked at the door. Freeh's secretary stuck her head in with a message. My time was up. I thanked him and left.

The FBI's recruiting policy did not change.

Since that meeting the Bureau has hired several thousand more agents, the vast majority of them white males, many from police departments and the military, the FBI's traditional breeding grounds. The Bureau doesn't have to spend a dime recruiting such men. They stay forever and make good agents, but they aren't the only resource available.

Throughout my tenure as a recruiting agent I wrote quarterly reports to headquarters urging a change in the hiring policy. I had one last opportunity to discuss it with Freeh, in December of 1998, nine months before I retired. He visited the Birmingham office and asked for comments. I again pointed

out the Bureau's abysmal record in hiring black women. This seemed to be news to him. He wrote on his legal pad. I told him how we could correct the situation. He wrote some more.

Nothing changed.

Despite my recommendation, Alethea Pittman was not offered a job by the FBI after her graduation from law school, in 1999. Instead she worked for a while in the court system in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, and is now working toward an M.B.A. at the University of Alabama. She will flourish in any career she pursues. I told Pittman that I still wanted her to become an

FBI agent, that she had the integrity and the ability to prosper in the Bureau. I apologized for its failure to hire her when she graduated from law school. I urged her to maintain her interest in becoming an agent, and I wished her well. She promised to consider a career in the FBI someday.

In 1999, when I retired, there were 8,183 white male agents, 1,652 white female agents, 544 black male agents, and only 118 black female agents. In that year, after the most extensive recruiting drive in Bureau history, not one African-American woman was hired. —JACK OWENS

NOME, ALASKA

WOE IS ME

The only way to conquer melancholy is to embrace it

.....

When I was younger, I used to—not enjoy, exactly, but take a certain satisfaction from being melancholy and depressed. As a single guy in an apartment in New York, I often spent days at a time in an unbroken mood of gloom, regret, self-recrimination, dislike for the world and for other human beings, and general unearned despair. In later years, married and with kids, I had to give up this indulgence. Walking around depressed with no reason is disagreeable behavior for which family and friends will rebuke you, rightly.

Plus I just didn't have the time for it anymore. Whenever I'd get started on a good downslope of melancholy, family concerns or pleasures would distract me, and I would abandon my mood in irritation. Nowadays my only opportunity for an old-fashioned, self-indulgent sulk comes when I'm traveling.

I had one opportunity recently in Nome, Alaska, a far-northern town on

the Bering Sea. I had gone there to do some reporting, which bad weather made impossible. I sat in my motel room for several days, getting gloomier and gloomier. Rain fell constantly. The month was August, and the rainy twilight lasted from four in the morning until midnight. Outside my window Bering Sea waves the color of wet cement landed on the riprap shoreline with thuds. To say that Nome, Alaska, is mainly mud with pieces of rusted iron sticking out of it is to be unfair to that interesting place, but so it appeared to me at the time. On my motel-room bed I read obscure books to the sound of the rain and the waves, taking occasional breaks to stare at the ceiling. I saw almost no one, never cracked a smile, and was as sorry for myself as I could be. After three or four days, completely bummed out, I went to the airport and flew home. I arrived pale, monosyllabic, and wonderfully refreshed. —IAN FRAZIER



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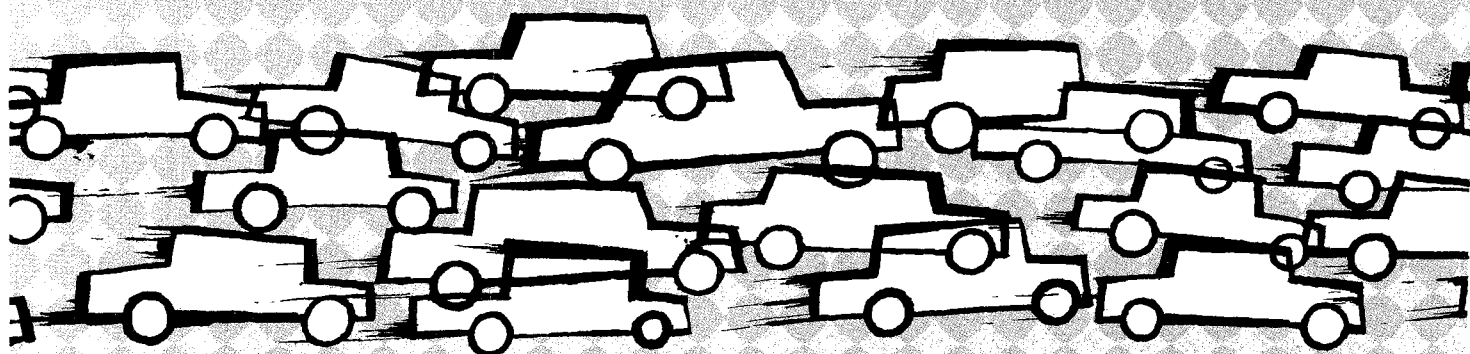


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THE REINVENTION OF PRIVACY

*It used to be that business
and technology were considered the
enemies of privacy. Not anymore*

BY TOBY LESTER

Illustrations by Carter Goodrich

.....

A relatively unsung virtue of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office is that its databases can be viewed collectively as a sort of cultural seismograph, registering interesting spikes of entrepreneurial enthusiasm. A patent application filed on January 10, 1995, is part of one such spike. Issued as U.S. Patent 5,629,678 ("Personal tracking and recovery system"), the patent is summed up in an abstract that begins,

Apparatus for tracking and recovering humans utilizes an implantable transceiver incorporating a power supply and actuation system allowing the unit to remain implanted and functional for years without maintenance. The implanted transmitter may be remotely actuated, or actuated by the implantee. Power for the remote-activated receiver is generated electromechanically through the movement of body muscle. The device is small enough to be implanted in a child.

Until recently such an idea might have seemed better suited to science fiction or political allegory than to real life. But in December of 1999 the patent was acquired by a Florida-based company named Applied Digital Solutions, and it is now the basis of an identity-verification and remote-monitoring system that ADS calls Digital Angel. "We believe the potential global market for this device," ADS announces on its Web site, "could exceed \$100 billion."

New surveillance and information-gathering technologies are everywhere these days, and they're setting off all sorts of alarm bells for those who worry about the erosion of privacy. The result has been a clangor of dire predictions.

Books have recently appeared with such titles as *Database Nation: The Death of Privacy in the 21st Century* (by Simson Garfinkel), *The Unwanted Gaze: The Destruction of Privacy in America* (by Jeffrey Rosen), and *The End of Privacy: How Total Surveillance Is Becoming a Reality* (by Reg Whitaker). Polls suggest that the public is gravely concerned: a 1999 *Wall Street Journal*-NBC survey, for instance, indicated that privacy is the issue that concerns Americans most about the twenty-first century, ahead of overpopulation, racial tensions, and global warming. Politicians can't talk enough about privacy, and are rushing to pass laws to protect it. Increasingly, business and technology are seen as the culprits. "Over the next 50 years," the journalist Simson Garfinkel writes in *Database Nation*, "we will see new kinds of threats to privacy that don't find their roots in totalitarianism, but in capitalism, the free market, advanced technology, and the unbridled exchange of electronic information."

There's a general sense, too, that businesses in the modern free market are indifferent to the threats their new technologies pose to privacy. That sense seemed powerfully confirmed in early 1999, when Scott McNealy, the chief executive officer of Sun Microsystems, was asked whether privacy safeguards had been built into a new computer-networking system that Sun had just released. McNealy responded that consumer-privacy issues were nothing but a "red herring," and went on to make a remark that still resonates. "You have zero privacy anyway," he snapped. "Get over it."

But something very interesting is happening: the market for goods and services that protect privacy is surging. Entrepreneurs are realizing that privacy and technology are

not fundamentally at odds—and that, in fact, expectations of privacy have in large measure always been created or broadened by the arrival of new technologies. People are coming to accept the notion that the protection of privacy is a pervasive and lasting concern in the computer age—and that, indeed, it may turn out to be *the* true enabler of the information economy.

Companies old and new are getting into the business. The number of newly registered privacy-related trademarks and patents has risen dramatically in the past few years; they include everything from banking services and computer technologies to window treatments and even an independent software agent (“for protecting consumers’ privacy”) called Privacy Just Got Cool. Anonymous Web-browsing and e-mailing services are available from companies called Anonymizer, Hushmail, IDcide, PrivacyX, and ZipLip. An outfit called Disappearing has developed an e-mail system that allows users to send messages that permanently unwrite themselves after a previously specified amount of time. Sales of personal paper shredders are up. Personal bodyguards are increasingly in demand. American Express has just unveiled a system called Private Payments, which generates a random, unique card number for each online purchase. A California law firm now offers to prepare something it calls The Privacy Trust, which, it claims, “successfully conceals ownership of bank and brokerage accounts, the family home, rental properties, and interests in other entities.” Money may soon begin to be “minted” solely in electronic form, creating “digital cash” that could make credit cards (and the data gathering they make possible) obsolete. There is serious talk of building privacy protection into the infrastructure of the Internet, and of using such protection, paradoxically, to make the flow of information freer than ever before.

Billions of dollars are at stake. A new sector of the economy seems to be coming into being. Among entrepreneurs and venture capitalists it already has a name. It’s known as the privacy space.

THE DECADE OF TRACKING AND MONITORING

The privacy debate is, essentially, a debate about the control of personal information. What’s unsettling about Digital Angel, for example, is not that the remote electromechanical monitoring of a human being is possible. In fact, it’s easy to see the potential benefits of such a technology: doctors and hospitals could use it to keep an unobtrusive twenty-four-hour watch on patients at home; military commanders could use it to monitor the exact locations of soldiers in battle. What is unsettling to a lot of people is the idea that personal data—in this case, one’s very life signs—might be converted into information that could be exchanged, bought, or sold for secondary use without one’s knowledge or consent. Conceivably, for instance, in-

surers or drug companies might pay a lot of money for access to the very specific information in hospitals’ Digital Angel databases.

These examples are hypothetical, but the issue most certainly is not: there are plenty of ways in which personal data is already gathered and exchanged for secondary use. People give away vast amounts of valuable information about themselves, wittingly or unwittingly, by using credit cards, signing up for supermarket discount programs, joining frequent-flyer clubs, sending e-mail, browsing on the Internet, using electronic tollbooth passes, mailing in rebate forms, entering sweepstakes, and calling toll-free numbers. Such behaviors are essentially voluntary (although a somewhat abstract case can be made that they are the product of what has been called “the tyranny of convenience”), but many other ways of participating in everyday life basically *require* the divulging of information about oneself. A person can’t function in American society without regularly using a Social Security number, which has become a de facto national ID number—and which, as such, is the key to all sorts of private information. If one needs a mortgage, as almost everybody buying a home does, one has to turn over pages of detailed background data, some of which banks can then sell to whomever they like. People who buy prescription drugs now leave a trail of highly sensitive (and therefore valuable) personal information that is often gathered up and sold. The proliferation of surveillance cameras in public places means that one’s comings and goings are increasingly a matter of public record.

The now very familiar reaction to all of this was recently reprised for me by the privacy activist Richard M. Smith, who has made a name for himself by exposing false or misleading claims made by companies about their privacy practices. “This coming decade is going to be known as the decade of tracking and monitoring,” I was told by Smith, who recently became the chief technology officer of a watchdog organization called the Privacy Foundation. “Technologies are going to come online to monitor us in ways we would never have imagined ten years ago. It’s going to be with us throughout our lives. The past five years on the Internet have been the prototype of what’s going to happen in the offline world. Cell phones. Smart cards. Digital TV. Biometrics. It’s happening. There are going to be millions of things tracking us that we’ve never even dreamed of.”

It’s a complicated equation, of course. “The same technologies that have raised concerns about a ‘surveillance society’ have historically made possible many benefits that most citizens would prefer not to surrender,” Phil Agre, an associate professor of information studies at the University of California at Los Angeles, has written, in *Technology and Privacy: The New Landscape* (1997), a thought-provoking collection of essays edited by Agre and the privacy advocate Marc Rotenberg. Even Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, has weighed in on the



topic. In a 1998 letter to Congressman Edward J. Markey, Greenspan wrote,

The appropriate balancing of the increasing need for information in guiding our economy to ever higher standards of living, and essential need of protection of individual privacy in such an environment, will confront public policy with one of its most sensitive tradeoffs in the years immediately ahead.

The gloomy assessment of that tradeoff today is that privacy concerns are losing out, and that something needs to be done about the problem right now, before patterns are established and built into the infrastructure of the economy. (In some respects this argument is made for the benefit of future generations, because voluminous information about people alive today has already seeped out into the public domain.) The national mood has led to a flurry of privacy-related activity in Congress. Pending Senate bills include the Consumer Privacy Protection Act, the Privacy and Identity Protection Act of 2000, the Notice of Electronic Monitoring Act, the Consumer Internet Privacy Enhancement Act, the Secure Online Communication Enforcement Act of 2000, and the Freedom From Behavioral Profiling Act of 2000.

Not everybody, however, has faith in the government's ability to legislate control of—or even to understand—an issue as complicated and as rapidly changing as privacy in the information age. American industry has therefore come out in favor of self-regulation—assuming that businesses, in response to a form of peer pressure, will individually and collectively

develop reasonable methods for protecting privacy. (To date the most visible results of this approach are the fairly easy-to-find privacy policies posted on company Web sites.)

The relative merits of legislation and self-regulation are fiercely debated, and will no doubt continue to be so for some time. But this story is not about that debate. Rather, it is about the fact that many businesses view the coming several years—the period during which the debate will probably play itself out—as an opportunity to seize lucrative leadership in the privacy space.

“AN EMERGING BUSINESS IMPERATIVE”

“What so many businesses don’t get,” Ann Cavoukian, the information and privacy commissioner of Ontario, Canada, told me not long ago, “is that you shouldn’t be having an adversarial relationship with privacy. Privacy is good for business. I’ve argued this from day one. If you’re in the information business today, you’ve got to lead with privacy.”

We were sitting in Cavoukian’s office, on the seventeenth floor of a high-rise in midtown Toronto, chatting and nibbling chocolate-covered biscuits. The room was huge, immaculate, and tastefully appointed in the somewhat generic way that the offices of important government officials often are. We sat next to a coffee table, on tightly upholstered furniture; CNN flickered silently on a television in the background. A wall of windows provided a commanding view of the city.

I had sought out Cavoukian because I had just read the book she wrote with Don Tapscott, *Who Knows: Safeguarding Your Privacy in a Networked World* (1997), and had been impressed by its pragmatic approach. One sentence in particular had struck me: “Protection of privacy is not just a moral or social issue; it is also an emerging business imperative.” This ran counter to most of what I had read, and I wanted to hear more.

Cavoukian—an energetic woman of Armenian descent, who happens to be the sister of the children’s songwriter Raffi—radiates enthusiasm, especially when the topic is privacy. This is as it should be: her job, as commissioner, is to educate the public about privacy matters and to ensure that all government agencies in Ontario abide by the province’s freedom-of-information and protection-of-privacy laws. Her office’s mandate doesn’t yet include oversight of the private sector, but pending legislation may soon change that. In any case, she’s clearly committed to engaging local companies in a meaningful dialogue about privacy.

Cavoukian’s reach extends far beyond Ontario. She and her staff have developed enough of a reputation for leadership and innovative thinking that companies from the United States—where her job has no equivalent—regularly seek her advice. The day before my visit a delegation from American Express had come to discuss the company’s brand-new suite of privacy initiatives.

"What I caution people against," Cavoukian said, "is throwing in the towel. It's still early days, and we can't give up just because people say 'You have no privacy, get over it.' So much has been written about the erosion of privacy that it makes you want to say 'Enough!' Let's take all that as a given, and focus on the exciting new things that are happening. In this decade we're going to see the emergence of a new breed of privacy-protective company. It's leading-edge."

Cavoukian shifted forward in her seat excitedly. "There's a book that predicted much of this back in 1997, when there was a lot of privacy erosion happening without much protection. It was one of those turn-of-the-millennium books (what's going to happen, lots of predictions, that sort of stuff), by two business types, Jim Taylor and Watts Wacker, called *The 500-Year Delta: What Happens After What Comes Next*. I loved their take on things. They said, and I can quote this because I use it so much, 'Here's a prediction you can take to the bank: Within a decade, privacy management will be one of America's great growth service industries.' Their argument was that privacy is becoming increasingly scarce, and as it becomes more scarce, it's going to become more valuable—and *that* means you'll soon find new businesses that are developing to try to protect it. I thought that was great. And you know what? It's starting to happen. For example, have you heard of Zero-Knowledge Systems, in Montreal?"

Cavoukian went on to describe the company as "in a class by itself" and "the Mercedes-Benz of anonymizer-technology companies." It sounded intriguing.

HITTING A FLY WITH A SLEDGEHAMMER?

"It's a neat space to be in," Dov Smith told me, as we walked through the offices of Zero-Knowledge Systems. "The privacy space." Young and soft-spoken, Smith is the company's director of public relations, and he was giving me a tour of its brand-new headquarters, which occupy three floors of an upscale office building in Montreal's Latin Quarter. The design was spare, in a Bauhaus sort of way that implied a recent and significant influx of venture capital. Doors were made of glass, and clicked open only when employees flashed special cards at nearby sensors. Imposing stacks of sleek black computer equipment stood behind big hallway windows, quietly flashing little red and green lights. Tiny black halogen lamps hung over clusters of colorful retro chairs and tables in the central hallways, which formed a square around a large glassed-in atrium.

"We like to think of ourselves as a Silicon Valley company in Montreal," Smith said proudly. He showed me vending machines stocked with free juice and soda; a cappuccino bar with a pool table, a Ping-Pong table, and a dart board; an in-house cafeteria run by a local restaurateur; and bunk beds for anybody who might need to crash. Massage was of course also available—for a high-tech start-up these days, Smith said, it is "almost *de rigueur*."



Zero-Knowledge is a privately held company that was co-founded in 1997 by two brothers, Austin and Hamnett Hill, and their father, Hammie. It claims, quite simply, to be "leading the privacy revolution." Currently the only product the company offers is something it calls Freedom 2.0, which combines a free computer program with an international network of participating Internet service providers. Some basic privacy and security services are free, such as a personal firewall and an ad manager, but for \$49.95 one gets access to a premium service that essentially amounts to an impenetrable online cloaking device. By wrapping information in multiple layers of the strongest encryption available and passing it through the Freedom network, Zero-Knowledge allows customers to establish as many as five untraceable pseudonymous digital identities, or "nyms," with which to browse Web sites and send e-mail.

Plenty of other companies have in the past couple of years jumped into the online anonymizing business. Many provide their services free, in fact. But none offers the pseudonymous segmentation of identity that Zero-Knowledge makes possible, and none makes the claim, as Zero-Knowledge does, that information about its users simply cannot be retrieved. Many anonymizer companies concede that if presented with a subpoena, they can, and indeed must, supply information about a given user's browsing habits and identity. This prompts skeptics to point out that if a company can access data about its users, then others (unprincipled government agents, hackers, snooping employers, litigious ex-spouses, criminals, and so on) can too, with or without a subpoena—and that means privacy isn't protected.

To avoid that bind Zero-Knowledge has invested a lot of time and money in developing cryptographic privacy solutions that, it claims, guarantee that it has no data on and—as its name implies—knows absolutely nothing about its users. “Some people might think we’re hitting a fly with a sledgehammer,” Dov Smith told me. “I mean, all of this crypto for e-mail and Web browsing. But we wanted to establish ourselves. We think we can become the dominant player in a multinational business that cuts horizontally through every market.”

That stopped me short. It seemed quite a claim for a company operating in what had to be the rather limited niche of anonymous Web browsing and e-mailing. It called to mind a conversation I had had not long before with Ruvan Cohen, the president and chief operating officer of iPrivacy, a new and ambitious New York-based company that aims to enable private online buying and shipping—a tricky feat that almost nobody else is now attempting. “A lot of these companies float privacy up the flagpole,” Cohen said about the anonymizers, “and then nobody comes. So to have five

thousand customers, or even twenty thousand customers, the best of whom are Chinese dissidents and Kosovar rebels who don’t want to be tracked when they’re surfing, and the worst of whom are pedophiles and drug dealers—

that’s not a business that I would particularly want to be in. The truth is, how do you make money in an e-mail business? How do you make money in surfing? The only way you can do it is advertising. And the only way you can get advertising is if you’re going to have customer information—and if you’re going to use it. To me, the logic of that business model tends to fall apart.” I agreed, and planned to press Austin and Hamnett Hill about such questions.

As we wrapped up our tour, Smith deposited me in a conference room and handed me a collection of articles that I “really should read” about the importance of cryptography, specifically for Zero-Knowledge but also for the privacy world in general. Then he went to find the Hill brothers.

THE CYPHERPUNKS

In 1787, while serving as the U.S. ambassador in Paris, Thomas Jefferson sent a report to James Madison on the volatile situation in pre-Revolutionary France. “These views are said to gain upon the nation,” he wrote. “The 1647 678.914 for 411.454 is 979.996.607.935 of all 789. The 404 is 474.872. And an 223 435.918 of some sort is not impossible.”

The message was diplomatically sensitive, and to keep

its contents private Jefferson had resorted to using a secret cipher that he knew only Madison could unlock. (Decrypted, the message read, “These views are said to gain upon the nation. The king’s passion for drink is divesting him of all respect. The queen is detested. And an explosion of some sort is not impossible.”)

According to Bruce Schneier, the author of *Applied Cryptography* (1995), the development and use of such codes was until recently “the province of learned people everywhere.” After World War II, however, cryptography essentially became the secret and exclusive province of government. In fact, the cryptographic systems produced by computers in this country were considered so powerful and so important to the national interest that they were classified as munitions, and their export was eventually banned by the Department of State. But the advent of personal computers changed everything. Suddenly the idea emerged that cryptography could and should protect not only national secrets but also private personal data stored on and transmitted between computers. In 1991 a software engineer

named Philip Zimmerman created and made freely available a powerful encryption program called Pretty Good Privacy. PGP soon made its way overseas, and the U.S. government—which strongly resisted the idea of putting top-grade cryptography into public hands, for

fear of its abuse by unsavory elements—opened a criminal investigation into Zimmerman for, among other things, having exported a munition. Defenders of PGP and other forms of encryption rallied behind Zimmerman and made his case a cause célèbre, arguing that the expression of ideas in cryptography, like any other form of expression, is protected by the First Amendment. (*Applied Cryptography*, a sort of how-to manual, was written and published very much in that spirit.) The government investigated Zimmerman for three years before yielding to the inevitability of publicly available cryptography and dropping the case.

Zimmerman became the model for a new breed of privacy activist—namely, one who uses computer technology to protect privacy. In 1992, inspired by his example, a band of mathematicians, computer scientists, and software engineers based primarily in the San Francisco area began to discuss ways to defend personal privacy in the computer age. They were brought together by an intense ideological commitment to privacy and free speech, and by an anarchistic mistrust of government and big business. They dedicated themselves to creating and widely disseminating the best cryptography possible, for all to use. They called themselves the Cypherpunks.

“Privacy is necessary for an open society in the electron-

The protection of privacy has brought a new sector of the economy into being. Among entrepreneurs and venture capitalists it is known as the privacy space.

ic age," Eric Hughes, one of the original Cypherpunks, wrote in the opening of "A Cypherpunk's Manifesto," which he put online in 1993. The document continued,

People have been defending their own privacy for centuries with whispers, darkness, envelopes, closed doors, secret handshakes, and couriers. The technologies of the past did not allow for strong privacy, but electronic technologies do.

We the Cypherpunks are dedicated to building anonymous systems. We are defending our privacy with cryptography, with anonymous mail forwarding systems, with digital signatures, and with electronic money...

Cryptography will ineluctably spread over the whole globe, and with it the anonymous transactions systems that it makes possible.

The Cypherpunks' philosophy is extreme—they believe that cryptography and anonymous transactions should and will inevitably make the idea of the nation-state wither away—and their numbers are relatively few, but their influence has nevertheless been impressive. Their successful efforts to spread cryptography around the globe were a major factor in the U.S. government's decision in 1999 to relax its restrictions on the export of cryptography. And they have worked on and enabled a host of technologies that businesses—Zero-Knowledge Systems among them—are beginning to use to protect privacy online.

THE CADILLAC OF ANONYMIZERS

Eventually Austin and Hamnett Hill shambled in to meet me. In their late twenties, the brothers are already millionaires, from having created and then sold Canada's third largest Internet service provider. They both had goatees and wore black shirts and seriously baggy jeans. They had the habit of finishing each other's sentences. My first impression was that I was meeting two members of a white-guy rap group, but it faded fast. They had some very interesting things to say.

I started by asking how they had decided to create a privacy-protection business.

"The genesis of the idea," Austin said, "came from things like the PCP debates, which had a real civil-rights feel. We looked at that when we were selling our last business. People were so passionate about it, and we realized we had a chance to change what the Internet will look like ten years from now. We loved the idea that we could do something that would actually make a difference in the world—and that we might make a lot of money doing it. So we said,

'Okay, this is only going to get worse. The more computers are intertwined with our regular lives, the bigger these issues are going to be—'"

Hamnett jumped in. "Going in and redoing back-end systems and architecture and all that didn't seem to be realistic, so we started to try to think about what the best way was to chip away at this big block."

"Right," Austin resumed. "We said, 'What if we could take something like encryption but make it so simple that it would be to the privacy world what Netscape was to the Web—in other words, a platform that kicks off widespread change? What if we could build the ultimate consumer privacy tool? That's how we came up with the idea for Freedom.'"

He paused and looked me in the eye. "It's the Dolby analogy," he said. "Who's Dolby's competitor?"

I couldn't think of one.

"Nobody can answer that question! You just kind of expect that audio equipment will have Dolby. People will soon have the same expectations with regard to their digital devices. They'll ask, 'Are they privacy-enabled?' You may not understand it, and it may just be a menu item, but you want to know that it's there, and that it's built in by default.

"Anyway, we thought that if we could come out with this tool, so that people could express their concerns or their passions

about privacy by actively *using* something, we could get huge brand loyalty, and we'd be at the heart of the debate. We wanted to make ourselves *the* experts, *the* leaders in the privacy space. Then it wouldn't matter where things went, because people would come to us to solve the privacy problem, and we'd figure out a way to make a really good business."

Austin's cell phone rang, and he left the room to take the call. Hamnett picked up where his brother had left off.

"We were just, like, 'Hey, get the best brains in privacy—the best technologists, the best policy people—and focus on them.' The first group we *had* to get on board was the Cypherpunks, because they really do the best thinking about crypto systems, particularly about how those systems apply to social issues like privacy, and because they can just rip you apart if you don't do things right."

By all accounts, Zero-Knowledge has so far been extraordinarily successful in building its staff. It has managed to lure several of the world's top cryptographers and software developers, and its absolutist commitment to privacy protection does seem to have won over the Cypherpunks—so much so that a leading Cypherpunk and cryptographer, Ian Goldberg, is now the company's chief scientist. Zero-Knowledge has also recently hired one of Canada's best-

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known policy experts—Stephanie Perrin, a longtime government official who was one of the prime movers in the development of Canada's privacy policies and legislation. Perrin is responsible for public affairs, keeps tabs on the legislative environment, maintains ties with governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and oversees the development and monitoring of Zero-Knowledge's overall privacy policy.

These efforts have paid off. Zero-Knowledge is awash in investment (as of this writing it has received more than \$30 million), and its reputation as the Fort Knox or the Cadillac of anonymizers seems firmly established. I still wondered, though, as I listened to Hamnett, whether all of this made good business sense. When Austin returned, I asked.

"Not a lot of people understand the privacy space," Austin said. "Freedom's going to be only a small part of what we end up doing. It's just our first entry into the space. You know, a lot of people think privacy's like the weather: everybody talks about it, there's not a lot you can do about it, so the best you can do is build a niche market selling umbrellas. That's what some people think we're doing. It's a view that's rather limiting—but we're actually working hard not to change it for a while."

The brothers chuckled conspiratorially.

"We think privacy is going to be one of the biggest industries out there," Austin continued, "because it's a foundation-level industry that touches every single aspect of personal information. Think about how much business is predicated on the flow of personal information! If you need to add privacy as a foundation under all of that, what is that industry worth? It's huge. Billions and billions and billions. We're very glad to see other privacy players stepping into the mix, by the way, because it means that privacy really is becoming an industry. And an industry that has a marketplace of solutions has more chance for success."

A DISTRESSINGLY LEAKY SYSTEM

In the weeks after my visit to Zero-Knowledge, I began to think about the historical relationship between technology and privacy. What interested me most was that people have always seemed to associate the arrival of new technologies with the invasion of privacy. It's a phenomenon that the privacy activist Robert Ellis Smith describes at some length in his new book, *Ben Franklin's Web Site: Privacy and Curiosity From Plymouth Rock to the Internet* (2000), a fascinating study of attitudes toward privacy in American history. "Each time when there was renewed interest in protecting privacy," Smith writes about the modern era,

it was in reaction to new technology. First, in the years before 1890, came cameras, telephones, and high-speed publishing; second, around 1970, came the development of personal computers; and third, in the late 1990s, the coming of personal computers and the World Wide Web brought renewed interest in this subject.

To find out more about the relationship between technology and privacy, and particularly between computers and privacy, I sought out Phil Agre, the UCLA professor. I asked him if part of the reason computers seem to be such a threat is that they were inadvertently designed without privacy concerns in mind—somewhat in the way they were inadvertently designed without the year 2000 in mind.

"Privacy wasn't left out unintentionally," Agre responded. "The main tradition of computer systems design originated in military and industrial contexts, where surveillance and control were taken for granted as good things. It was also informed by the ideology of technological rationalization, according to which there is a 'one best way' to organize the world, which it is the engineer's job to discover and impose. The command-and-control assumptions of that world view are deeply ingrained in the practices of systems analysis and design that are taught in school to thousands of engineering students every year, and that are reified in thousands of legacy computers that new computers need to be compatible with."

"That said, one area where the 'unintentional omission' story makes sense is the Web. Personal computers were shaped by a false idea about the person—roughly, the idea that each person is an island. They were also shaped by the need for great simplicity, given how small and weak the first personal-computer hardware was. So those early PCs didn't have real operating systems. The operating systems of mainframe computers had, and have, serious ideas about security—for example, means of preventing users from reading one another's files or trashing the system. But all those techniques went out the window on the personal computer. Not only was there no room for them but they were thought unnecessary, because there was only one user. But then personal computers were attached to computer networks. The computer network was treated as a peripheral device, like a printer, and the whole idea that one was opening the computer out onto a potentially untrustworthy domain was hard to comprehend, much less deal with technically."

In other words, we have inherited computer systems and communications technologies that—partly by design and partly by chance—are not inherently privacy-friendly. Lots of transparency has been engineered in, lots of security has been left out, and we're stuck with a system that from a privacy standpoint is distressingly leaky.

It is interesting to note here that no right to privacy is specified in the Constitution. This comes as a surprise to many people, who tend to assume that privacy is one of the bedrock rights upon which American society is built. But as Smith points out in *Ben Franklin's Web Site*, until the late nineteenth century Americans for the most part thought of privacy as a physical concept: if one needed to protect it, or just wanted more of it, one simply moved west, where there were fewer people likely to know or care what one was doing. By the closing years of the nineteenth century, however, things had changed: the frontier's limits had been reached,

the population was growing rapidly, and a blitz of novel technologies had arrived.

Two of these were cameras and high-speed printing presses. For the first time, spontaneous, unposed pictures could be taken, quickly printed in newspapers and books, and distributed widely, all without the subjects' consent. This possibility was highly unsettling to many people (as it still is in remote cultures less familiar with photography), and it led to an article by Samuel D. Warren and the future Supreme Court justice Louis D. Brandeis—"The Right to Privacy," published in the *Harvard Law Review*, on December 15, 1890—that began to define privacy for the modern age.

"Recent inventions and business methods," Warren and Brandeis wrote,

call attention to the next step which must be taken for the protection of the person, and for securing to the individual what Judge Cooley calls [in a famous treatise on torts that was published in 1879] the right "to be let alone." Instantaneous photographs and newspaper enterprise have invaded the sacred precincts of private and domestic life; and numerous mechanical devices threaten to make good the prediction that "what is whispered in the closet shall be proclaimed from the house-tops."

... The intensity and complexity of life, attendant upon advancing civilization, have rendered necessary some retreat from the world, and man, under the refining influence of culture, has become more sensitive to publicity, so that solitude and privacy have become more essential to the individual; but modern enterprise and invention have, through invasions upon his privacy, subjected him to mental pain and distress, far greater than could be inflicted by mere bodily injury.

Warren and Brandeis's masterstroke was to document in the common law the presence of a "principle which protects personal writings and any other productions of the intellect or of the emotions," and to argue that "the law has no new principle to formulate when it extends this protection to the personal appearance, sayings, acts, and to personal relation, domestic or otherwise." In other words, the two men broadened the legal conception of privacy to include not only the tangible but also the intangible realm.

THE PRIVACY PRAGMATISTS

The argument set forth in "The Right to Privacy" has been enormously influential. One cannot help hearing echoes of it in, to take just one important example, the landmark privacy decision set forth by the Supreme Court in the 1965 case *Griswold v. Connecticut*. Striking down state laws that made the use of contraceptives by married couples illegal, Justice William O. Douglas wrote, in the majority opinion, "Specific guarantees in the Bill of Rights have penumbras, formed by emanations from those guarantees that help give them life and substance ... Various guarantees create zones of privacy."

Not long after that ruling the legal scholar Alan Westin published the groundbreaking study *Privacy and Freedom* (1967)—a book that, years ahead of its time, jolted the nation and the government into an awareness of privacy concerns in the information age. Arguing in the tradition of Warren, Brandeis, and Douglas, Westin made a compelling case that the Bill of Rights guaranteed a zone of privacy not only for one's person, one's sayings and acts, and one's relations but also for information about oneself. "Privacy is the claim of individuals, groups, or institutions," he wrote, "to determine when, how, and to what extent information about them is communicated to others."

Ever since the publication of *Privacy and Freedom*, Westin has been sought out as an expert on information privacy and business. Over the years he has served as a privacy consultant for more than a hundred companies—including American Express, Bank of America, Equifax, and IBM—and as a member of state and federal privacy commissions. Since 1993 he has been the editor and publisher of the influential bimonthly newsletter *Privacy and American Business*. During the past two decades he has worked on forty-five national public-opinion and leadership surveys on privacy. One of the results of his work on those surveys is that he has developed a widely cited taxonomy of American consumers, based on their attitudes toward privacy.

Westin divides the population into three categories. On one end of the spectrum are what he calls "privacy fundamentalists" (approximately 25 percent). They are deeply concerned about privacy rights and potential invasions of privacy, and they therefore reject any consumer benefits that require oversight of their activity or the release of data about themselves. The appeal of Zero-Knowledge, it would be fair to say, is to date largely limited to privacy fundamentalists.

At the other end of the spectrum are "the privacy unconcerned" (12 percent)—people who don't care to think about privacy, don't see any problem with giving their information away, and don't worry at all about how that information might be used. ("If McDonald's offered a free Big Mac for a DNA sample," Bruce Schneier told me, describing this attitude, "there would be lines around the block.")

Most people (63 percent) fall into an intermediate category that Westin calls "privacy pragmatists." Such people are always balancing the potential benefits and threats involved in sharing information, and are particularly concerned about what Ann Cavoukian described to me as "function creep"—that is, the secondary use (deliberate or inadvertent) of information that was originally divulged for one purpose only. Depending on what privacy pragmatists get in return for their information, they are willing to forsake different degrees of privacy protection.

From a business standpoint, this category is absolutely crucial. "The struggle over privacy today," Westin told me, after gruffly dismissing the idea that anonymizers will ever

have broad appeal, “is the struggle over the minds and hearts of the privacy pragmatists. And infomediary work is where that struggle is going.”

The word “infomediary” first attracted widespread attention when it appeared in the January-February, 1997, issue of the *Harvard Business Review*, in an article titled “The Coming Battle for Customer Information,” by John Hagel III and Jeffrey F. Rayport. The authors wrote,

We believe that consumers are going to take ownership of information about themselves and demand value in exchange for it ... Consumers probably will not bargain with vendors on their own, however. We anticipate that companies we call *infomediaries* will seize the opportunity to act as custodians, agents and brokers of customer information, marketing it to businesses on consumers’ behalf while protecting their privacy at the same time.

That article and a book that grew out of it—*Net Worth: Shaping Markets When Customers Make the Rules* (1999), by Hagel and Marc Singer—introduced a new business model for the information age. Already, lavishly funded companies with such names as Persona, Privada, and Lumeria have begun to put it to the test.

“WE’RE YOUR AGENT”

I called up Fred Davis, the founder and CEO of Lumeria, which has its headquarters in Berkeley, California, to find out more about the infomediary business. Davis is a longtime computer visionary and entrepreneur who has been involved in, among other ventures, the start-ups



of the Ask Jeeves search engine, the technology company C|NET, and *Wired* magazine. He has also been the editor of *MacUser* and *PC Week* magazines, and is the author of thirteen computer books, including *The Windows 98 Bible*. He’s a manic character who seems to operate in a permanent fast-forward mode, speaking in unstoppable gushes of enthusiasm and self-promotion. All I had to do was mention that I was interested in privacy, and he was off and running.

“Sure! I’m always happy to talk about my favorite subject!” he told me. “Privacy is perhaps the biggest social issue of the Internet age, and today’s practices don’t just suck, they’re downright unconstitutional! The Internet was never designed to be private, and in the early days there were attempts to take advantage of the fact that the technological infrastructure was designed to have everything open, and that there was no social infrastructure. People want to close their eyes to this, but you know what? Gays and people of color are targeted for hate crimes, and abortion doctors are targeted, all based on information that gets out over the Internet. Hello? What? It’s a serious problem.

“Basically, when we started up, three years ago, I said, ‘I don’t want my privacy invaded anymore, and I don’t want anybody stealing or selling my information without (a) my permission and (b) their cutting me in on the sale.’ What we figured out pretty quickly was that we needed to help people protect their identity. The knee-jerk reaction to privacy problems has been to take your identity away completely. That’s what these anonymizers do. But that’s a horrible thing too. Think about it: if we make everybody anonymous, they’re going to lose the value of their identity, and they’re not going to be able to benefit from who they are. That’s what this whole *Net Worth* book was about: there’s *five billion dollars* sitting on the table for the company that figures out how to give people control back over their information! It’s huge! If we pull this off, we’re a Fortune 500 company!”

I asked how Lumeria had been designed.

“Our model was that the individual should be able to control what information is shared with what entities—people, Web sites, commerce partners, whatever. What we needed was a system that could present information about you without revealing who you are, not even to us at Lumeria. So what I did was, I went out and hired a bunch of hackers and security nuts, and said, ‘Let’s re-engineer. Let’s create a system that is comprehensive enough so that even when *all* of your information—browsing habits, medical data, bank accounts, school transcripts—becomes digitized and moves into the Internet age, you can have a unified way to control and reveal and protect it.’ Basically, we created a new piece of Internet infrastructure for the secure communication and authentication of transmissions across the Internet. It took us a few years and millions of dollars to develop it, but now it’s here, and it’s pretty cool. The consumer has complete control for the first time. And the legislative future plays

into our hands. Soon we'll be a compliance mechanism for new privacy regulations. It's a great sell. It's a no-brainer. Businesses won't have to understand all of the great things we do for our customers. It's just, the feds are going to bust you if you don't use it!"

Davis went on, and on, sometimes in great technical detail and always at lightning speed, but as I understood it, the gist of his plan for Lumeria was this: A customer will store personal data in what is called a SuperProfile. The more specific the information stored (about such things as age, sex, family status, sexual orientation, income level, assets, consumer preferences, and current shopping interests), the more valuable that profile will become to advertisers, who will pay handsomely to participate in Lumeria's network. They will do this because Lumeria will give them the chance to do highly targeted, permission-based marketing—to offer special deals on, say, new cars or house-painting services or plane tickets—exclusively to people of a predetermined demographic profile, and often only to people who have already expressed an interest in the very things being advertised. Most of the money from advertisers will go directly to Lumeria's users; Lumeria will take a small cut.

According to Davis, this is a win-win proposition. Advertisers will save billions of dollars formerly spent on wasteful direct-mail, radio, TV, and print advertising campaigns, and will be better able to cultivate long-term relationships with preferred customers, by giving them exactly what they want. Consumers will be able quickly to get information about and find the best deals on whatever products they're interested in—and will get paid for doing it, simply by being a part of Lumeria's network.

I asked Davis whether gathering all of that data from consumers wouldn't create what is often referred to in the security business as a "honeypot"—an alluring mass of valuable information about consumers that is a natural target for privacy invasion.

"The thing is, remember, we don't have a database," he said. "We're not like some of these other guys, who put their information in a database and then just say they won't reveal it. What if you *buy* their company? Then what? Then you have their data! Our system is different: it distributes data across the Web. Nothing resides in a central database, and we have no way of gaining or granting access to your data. Only you do. We're just a platform for infomediation, and this means that every one of our value propositions is consumer-facing. We work for you, the consumer, as an agent to extract the maximum value for your identity. We help you copyright your profile. Not only that, we take your click trail and consider that a unique work of authorship. We'll even allow members to police the system, create mini-class actions, and—finally!—make prosecuting privacy violations cost-effective. That's aggressive. We're fighting fire with a neutron bomb. We're your agent."

THE SPREAD OF PRIVACY CONSULTANTS

Anonymizers and infomediaries aren't the only players in the privacy space. One of the hottest new jobs in certain sectors of the economy is that of chief privacy officer, or CPO. This is by no means just a Silicon Valley fad; rather, it represents a certain maturing of businesses' approach to privacy. "It's really healthy," Austin Hill told me. (Hill helped to start the trend, in fact, by hiring Stephanie Perrin, his policy expert, and by designating her Zero-Knowledge's CPO.) "What we're discovering," he added, "is that lots of places are hiring CPOs, often as a result of public-relations concerns, but then these guys are turning around and telling them, 'Hey, you've got some real problems. We've got to pay attention to this stuff.'"

All companies whose business in one form or another involves the management of personal information will probably end up having chief privacy officers in the near future. American Express, AT&T, and Microsoft already have them. So do companies as varied as Delta Airlines, Mutual of Omaha, the Royal Bank of Canada, and Equifax. Ahead of the game as always, Alan Westin has very recently created the Association of Corporate Privacy Officers, currently the only organization of its kind, and has begun to run a highly acclaimed training course for new CPOs. I asked him about the emergence of this new line of work.

"In the United States," he said, "the private sector has announced that it isn't in favor of federal privacy regulation covering the whole privacy sector. So what we've had is some sector-specific legislation, in financial services and health, but self-regulation elsewhere, especially on the Internet. Internet companies are now supposed to develop their own privacy policies. But as soon as you say you're going to self-regulate, you've got a problem. Who's going to develop the policy? Who's responsible for tracking legislation? For tracking competitors? Who's going to train employees? Who can do risk assessments? Who can do damage control in the press if there's a privacy firestorm? People pretty soon saw that they needed CPOs."

Even if not every company will need to hire a CPO, the signs are that the services of privacy consultants are going to be in regular demand from now on—to help companies develop overall privacy policies, to examine new and existing information-management systems for "seepage," to assess compliance with new legislation, to provide outside verification of a company's privacy-protection claims. New companies are emerging to provide a whole range of such services—an impressive example is Fiderus, based in North Carolina, which was founded by a former worldwide director of security and privacy for IBM, and which claims to be "the first company in the world to focus entirely on services and solutions for security *and* privacy." Zero-Knowledge has recently announced a new service, to be called Managed Privacy Services, that will combine consulting and

technical solutions in order to “enable businesses to comply with privacy legislation, maximize customer relationships, and build consumer trust.” But existing companies, too, are launching themselves wholeheartedly into the business. Big Five accounting firms have begun doing privacy audits, in an attempt to cash in on their long-standing reputation as trusted, impartial third parties. More than 200 companies have already submitted to audits by PricewaterhouseCoopers, including Microsoft’s travel Web site, Expedia.com. Even though the main value of such audits at this point is that they build public confidence, business seems brisk all around. “We’ve seen a dramatic increase in demand for our privacy services in the past couple of months,” I was told by Gary Lord, a partner and the chief technologist of

the information-risk-management practice at KPMG, one of the Big Five firms. Rather than looking at the costs associated with addressing privacy issues, “companies are asking, ‘What is the cost of us *not* doing this?’”

I called a prominent privacy consultant, the legal scholar Fred Cate, to ask about this surge of mainstream corporate interest in providing privacy services. Cate teaches information law at Indiana University and is the author of *Privacy in the Information Age* (1997) and *The Internet and the First Amendment* (1998). “These days you’re nobody if you’re not a privacy consultant,” he told me. “There’s no law firm, no accounting firm, nobody *at all*, who’s willing to admit to you that they don’t know anything about privacy. It’s big, big business. That’s something to remember about

THE IRON BRIDGE

I am standing on a disused iron bridge
that was erected in 1902,
according to the iron plaque bolted into a beam,
the year my mother turned one.
Imagine—a mother in her infancy,
and she was a Canadian infant at that,
one of the great infants of the province of Ontario.

But here I am leaning on the rusted railing
looking at the water below,
which is flat and reflective this morning,
sky-blue and streaked with high clouds,
and the more I look at the water,
which is like a talking picture,
the more I think of 1902
when workmen in shirts and caps
riveted this iron bridge together
across a thin channel joining two lakes
where wildflowers blow along the shore now
and pairs of swans float in the leafy coves.

1902—my mother was so tiny
she could have fit into one of those oval
baskets for holding apples,
which her mother could have lined with a soft cloth
and placed on the kitchen table
so she could keep an eye on infant Katherine
while she scrubbed potatoes or shelled a bag of peas,

the way I am keeping an eye on that cormorant
who just broke the glassy surface
and is moving away from me and the iron bridge,
swiveling his curious head,
slipping out to where the sun rakes the water
and filters through the trees that crowd the shore.

And now he dives,
disappears below the surface,
and while I wait for him to pop up,
I picture him flying underwater with his strange
wings,

as I picture you, my tiny mother,
who disappeared last year,
flying somewhere with your strange wings,
your wide eyes, and your heavy wet dress,
kicking deeper down into a lake
with no end or name, some boundless province
of water.

—BILLY COLLINS

all of us, you know: there are selfish reasons to beat the privacy drum in addition to whatever 'legitimate' reasons there are. I make money as a privacy consultant. These companies all make money because people are worried about privacy. The advocates raise funds because privacy's a key issue. And politicians get enormous positive ratings simply by talking about privacy."

A staggering number of bills to help rein in the corporate use of personal information are under consideration around the country. "People I've talked to on the Hill believe that privacy will be one of the hottest issues, if not *the* hottest issue, for the next three to five years," I was told by Stephen Lucas, a leading privacy-policy adviser who is also the CPO for Persona. "It's hard to find a person on the Hill who isn't involved in this issue in some way, shape, or form. During the hundred-and-fifth session of Congress more than a hundred privacy-related bills were debated at the federal level—and more than a *thousand* bills at the state level."

The flurry of interest certainly is remarkable. But Fred Cate, for one, worries about the wisdom of proceeding with such haste to address an issue that, because it is evolving so quickly, is vexingly hard to get a handle on. "People are being fed expectations—by the media, by politicians, by privacy advocates, by companies trying to sell privacy services—that they've never had before," Cate told me. "And as soon as somebody tells you to worry about something, it's hard not to. But it's not a bad idea to understand a subject before you regulate it. We're not talking about biological or chemical warfare here. Waiting another year would not be the end of the world. We've already got a gazillion laws that protect privacy, and to a certain extent they work or don't work based on your faith in the political system."

EXTREME SOLUTIONS

In *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (1998), the Yale political scientist James C. Scott has written, "The modern state, through its officials, attempts with varying success to create a terrain and a population with precisely those standardized characteristics that will be easiest to monitor, count, assess, and manage." This aspect of government is a natural one—personal information is as necessary and as valuable to efficient government as it is to efficient business. But there are plenty of people who take a decidedly dark view of it, and who therefore have very little faith in the ability of the political system to protect privacy. Recent revelations, in the midst of the rush to pass privacy-protection legislation, that the FBI has been developing and putting to use a sophisticated and questionably legal global computer-eavesdropping system—regrettably called Carnivore—haven't helped matters any. In the resulting clamor references to Big Brother abound.

One person who has very little faith in the government's commitment to privacy, particularly when it comes to financial matters, is Robert Hettinga, an entrepreneur in Boston. I

was referred to Hettinga by Phil Agre, who intriguingly described him as "the head cheerleader for a loose circle of financial cryptographers who want to build a parallel global financial system that the government cannot tax or audit." According to Agre, "This is not an implausible goal."

I met Hettinga one day last summer, at a luncheon meeting of the Digital Commerce Society of Boston, which he founded in 1995, and we struck up a conversation about privacy. Soon after, I called him on the phone to hear more of what he had to say. After making it clear to me that financial privacy wasn't really his goal but simply an inevitable result of his business plan, Hettinga explained the essence of his company, the Internet Bearer Underwriting Corporation (IBUC), which he established in 1999.

"The idea that financial privacy can be cheaper than transparency started out as a straw man," he told me, "but every time it got knocked down, it got back up a little bigger. Now it's the size of, you know, that marshmallow man in *Ghostbusters*. But anyway, here's my rant. I like to claim that the reason that we have to put up with taxes, and with regulations that invade our privacy, and with people calling us to sell stuff, and with spam and all that, is that we have to keep records of who we do business with, in case they lie to us. It's embedded in how we do business these days. It used to be that you would hand over a token in exchange for goods of some sort. That was called a bearer transaction. You didn't need to know anything about the person you were doing business with, because you knew what money looked like, and the transaction executed, cleared, and settled all at once. That's how cash works, by the way. It's anonymous and very efficient. Until World War Two it was the primary means of payment for all but the largest transactions. But when telephony and mainframe computers allowed transactions to execute and settle at a distance, we ended up making trades by recording them in a ledger or a database and then locking away whatever physical securities there were in a vault somewhere. That's called book-entry settlement. It's hugely invasive of privacy, but it's about three orders of magnitude cheaper than 'my Brinks truck to your cage,' so it's what we do."

Hettinga bubbled along exuberantly. "The rise of book-entry settlement has helped create a more invasive government, because the state, as law enforcer, if you will, becomes an integral part of the entire economy. You have to know who it is you're doing business with so that you can send them to jail if they lie to you. But within the past fifteen years or so Internet financial cryptographers have created fairly good anonymous digital-cash protocols. This means, once again, that there's no need to know or care who you're doing business with, because transactions can execute, settle, and trade all at once. So now we're back to bearer transactions—*Internet* bearer transactions—and the costs of doing business can drop dramatically. You reduce transaction costs, and that reduces firm size—down to the device level,

eventually. With Internet bearer settlement you don't need lawyers, or accountants, or even billing. All that goes away. The need for regulation goes down. In the end you get privacy because it's just cheaper, not because it's private."

Hettinga's sights are for the time being set on enabling what he described to me as a fraud-resistant form of "micropayments"—or, as he put it exactly, "functionally anonymous bearer-cash systems that do very small streaming transactions." ("We can do down to a thousandth of a dollar fairly easily," he told me. "Probably a millionth of a dollar, sooner or later.") "Minting" money in these denominations was simply not cost-effective until recently, but there are already lots of potential applications. To take just one appealing example, Hettinga suggests that IBUC micropayments could resolve the current debate among consumers, musicians, and the music industry about the exchange of music over the Internet. Consumers would pay only a tiny amount each time they downloaded a piece of music, but collectively musicians and the music industry would still make plenty of money, perhaps even more than before.

Hettinga's ideas may seem radical, but they're nothing compared with what is perhaps the most extreme scheme now being put to the test for keeping private data out of the hands of government. A new Cypherpunk-motivated company, called HavenCo,

has plans, already being implemented, to set up an offshore data haven on a rusting and abandoned World War II anti-aircraft platform some six miles east of the coast of England. In 1967, when the platform was considered to be outside British territorial waters, it was "occupied" by a former British army major named Roy Bates, who named it The Principality of Sealand and declared it an independent state. Bates soon designated himself, his wife, and their son as Sealand's "royal family," and began issuing passports, coins, and stamps. Things were generally lackluster for the new nation, however, until 1999, when representatives of HavenCo negotiated with Bates and his son for the right to place a data haven on Sealand—and got "specific hands-off guarantees," HavenCo's chief executive officer, Sean Hastings, told me in an e-mail, "from the local government authorities" (the royal family, that is). The result, Hastings claims, is that HavenCo is "making real privacy available."

A MATTER OF TRUST

Making *real* privacy available? That's something that everybody now entering the privacy space claims to be doing, in one way or another. But most of what's happening at this point is still theoretical at best, and all sorts of difficult questions remain unanswered. How much legit-

imate cause for concern is there about privacy? Is it really something we should worry about—more than, say, racial tensions or global warming? Do we have less privacy than ever before—or do we have more? Are new technologies the problem—or the answer? Can privacy be good for business, and business good for privacy? Is it a commodity that can be bought and sold, or is it an inalienable human right?

The debate over these questions illustrates one irreducible truth: privacy is not so much a legal or technical concept as a social one. "The dominant feature of the current privacy debate," Fred Cate told me when I asked him to try to sum things up, "is its irrationality. The drivers are emotional." I think he's right. The crucial question about privacy today is the same it has always been—namely, whom should you trust?

A lot of people instinctively don't trust technology, especially in the hands of businesses, to protect privacy. But, as Robert Ellis Smith and others have pointed out, contemporary notions of privacy have in many cases evolved not despite new technology but because of it.

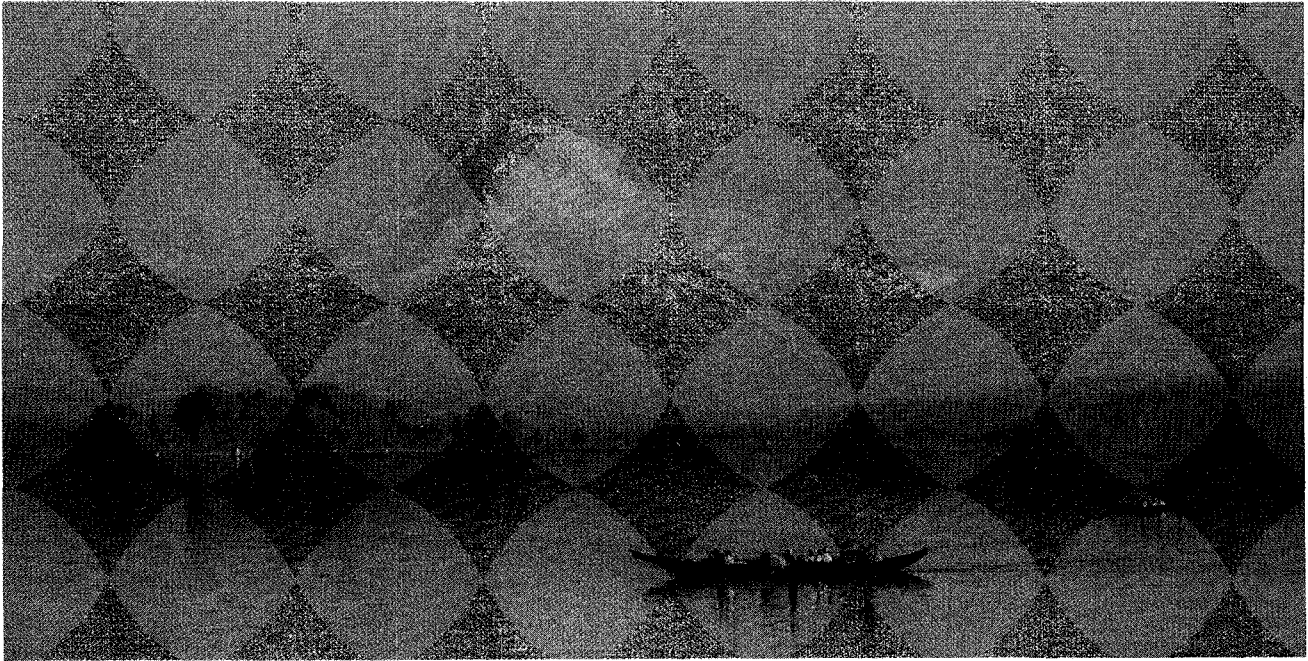
"Privacy," the influential journalist and editor E. L. Godkin famously wrote, in *Scribner's* magazine in 1890, "is a distinctly modern product, one of the luxuries of civilization." Phil Agre made a related point to me, a bit more bluntly. "The idea that technology and

*Contemporary notions of privacy
have evolved not despite new
technology but because of it.
"Privacy," one writer noted in 1890,
"is a distinctly modern product."*

privacy are intrinsically opposed," he said, "is false."

There seems to be plenty of evidence to justify that claim. One of the earliest technologies, writing, enabled a new and enduring form of private communication. The printing press popularized reading, an intensely private affair. The wristwatch privatized time. Cheap and widely available mirrors allowed, literally, a new level of private self-reflection. The gummed envelope boosted expectations of privacy in the mail. The technological advances of the Industrial Revolution led to the creation of a prosperous middle class that could afford to build houses with separate rooms for family members. The single-party telephone line allowed for direct, immediate, and private communication at a distance. Modern roads and mass-produced automobiles made private travel possible. Television and radio brought news and entertainment into private homes.

Then, of course, came personal computers, the Internet, wireless devices, biological engineering, and more—the full effects of which on the evolution of our notions of privacy are yet to be determined. This evolution will be one of the more interesting developments to watch in the twenty-first century. Nothing is clear yet, of course; but if history is any guide, a good place to get a sense of what's to come will be the databases of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. ▀



BATTLEGROUND OF THE EYE

In the Pacific Northwest, more than any other region of America, landscape painting embodies all our conflicting views—our hopes and delusions, our regrets and ambitions—about the natural world and the place of human beings in it. The author travels across time and ideology, canvas by canvas

BY JONATHAN RABAN

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Landscape—if you give that rather slippery term its full weight—is one of the great divisive issues in the Pacific Northwest. The landscape paintings of the region, from the eighteenth century to the present day, are pictorial dispatches from a long war that is more heated now than at any time in the past 200 years.

Landscape is land *shaped*—land subordinated to a vision or a use. A picture frame or a Claude glass* converts land into landscape; so, too, does a logging road or a barbed-wire fence. The railroad magnate and the painter of majestic wilderness scenes have in common their designs on the land: James J. Hill and Albert Bierstadt are brothers under the skin.

Consider this curious tale of two pictures of the Pacific Northwest. In 1999 Slade Gorton, the Republican senator

from Washington State, tacked an ingenious rider onto a bill intended to provide American aid for Kosovo. Gorton's rider concerned a proposed cyanide-leach gold mine in Okanogan County (he was for it). Eighteen months later, in the race between Gorton and his Democratic challenger, Maria Cantwell, the gold-mine rider came back to haunt him. (It may have lost him the election, which Cantwell won by a cigarette-paper-thin majority.)

In the Gorton-Cantwell race landscape turned into the central topic of debate, as the candidates fought over such questions as the Okanogan County mine, logging in national forests, and the breaching of dams on the Snake River. From the barrage of television ads that were broadcast by both sides, two pictures emerged, each executed in a style familiar to any Northwest gallery-goer. Gorton's was a tame Augustan landscape, with irrigated farms and gardens and orderly plantations, in which nature was tailored to human needs and specifications. Cantwell's was a landscape in the manner of Bierstadt or Thomas Cole—a Romantic wilder-

*In the eighteenth century, when the landscapes of Claude Lorraine were hugely admired in England, no tour of a great country estate was complete without a Claude glass—a gilt frame with an ornate handle, containing sometimes a tinted mirror, sometimes a pane of clear glass. From selected viewpoints along the route, the finest vistas of the estate were inspected with the Claude glass—living landscapes, in which (as in the paintings that figure in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter books) the sheep and deer could be seen to move.

ness, with free-swimming salmon and untouched stands of tangled old-growth forest (spotted owl calling to spotted owl), a realm of aboriginal solitude and grandeur.

Rural voters east of the Cascade Mountains showed an overwhelming preference for the Gorton picture, with its promise of money and jobs. West of the mountains, along the urban corridor that stretches north and south from Seattle, the Cantwell landscape found favor with hikers, bird-watchers, fly-fishers, and the mass of college-educated white-collar voters, who bear out the interesting paradox that Seattle is the first big city to which people have swarmed in order to get closer to nature.

One might hear echoes of that debate almost anywhere in the United States, but in the Pacific Northwest it is conducted with a peculiar and obsessive intensity, because here the wilderness itself seems to possess a tenacious memory. In this damp, dauntingly fertile climate the creeping salal and salmonberry, and the green spears of infant Douglas firs, are bent on restoring everyone's back yard to the temperate rain forest that it once was, not so long ago. The towns and cities of the Northwest tend to have a makeshift, provisional air, as if the forest might yet swallow them alive. Because the region was settled by whites more recently than elsewhere, its Indian past—10,000 years of it—lies very close to the surface, and Native American conceptions of landscape and land use remain live political issues here.

Last year's Senate race was fought on terms that go back to the eighteenth century, as the painted landscapes of the Pacific Northwest remind one, with their endless variations on the themes of wilderness, white settlement, tribal rights, and the competing claims of industry and nature. These paintings haven't dated. The questions they raise are all around us, even now.

John Webber was the first white artist to unpack his paint box in the Pacific Northwest. In the spring of 1778 Captain James Cook's *Resolution* put in to Nootka Sound, on the west coast of Vancouver Island, after a long northward haul up the Pacific Ocean from New Zealand, with stops in Tonga, Tahiti, and Hawaii. En route through Oceania, Webber, the official expedition artist, had painted a series of watercolors that are dominated by exotic tropical greenery in which every palm frond has a life of its own.

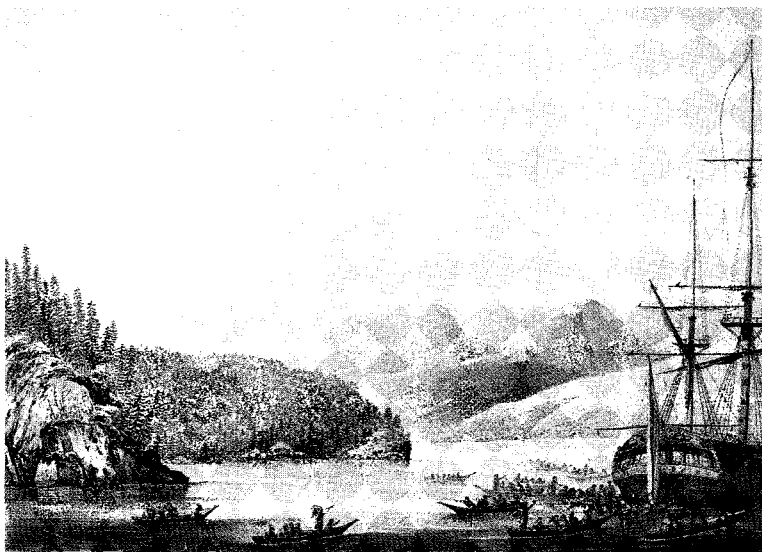
Cook's ship left the palms, wili wilis, breadfruit, and hibiscus of Hawaii on February 2; on March 29 it sailed into the great funnel-shaped approach to Nootka Sound, on the same latitude as the mouth of the English Channel. To British eyes the Pacific Northwestern light falls at a familiar and homely angle. The vegetation is Scottish, the weather Irish. After Hawaii, Nootka Sound must have felt to the voyagers like a wet and windy corner of their own country,

named New Albion, in honor of its teasing similarity to home.

Webber, who trained as a painter first in Switzerland and then in Paris, clearly seems to have experienced a bout of *déjà vu*. In sharp contrast to his Tahitian and Hawaiian watercolors, his Nootka sketches render the local scenery (and "scenery" it is) in brisk pictorial shorthand, the water, rocks, pines, and mountains composed into a strikingly efficient and conventional landscape. We might be on the shore of Lac Léman or Lake Windermere here.

Like Cook, in his posthumously published *Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* (1784), Webber seems to have barely noticed the land itself, so preoccupied was he with the Indians in the foreground—their swan-necked cedar canoes, their curious timber dwellings, the frames on which they dried their salmon. In Paris he had specialized in "picturesque peasant scenes," a useful preparation for his studies of Indian life. Though the figures are small on the page, they are exquisitely detailed and individuated. With a magnifying glass one can pick out their conical hats, woven from cedar bark, and capes made from sea-otter hides. Given his education, Webber almost certainly had encountered the ideas of Rousseau, and his Pacific Northwest is the habitat of "natural man," drawn with the fastidious zeal of a keen amateur anthropologist.

In 1791 and 1792, more than a decade after *Resolution's*



Above: John Webber, *A View in Ship Cove, Nootka Sound, 1778*

Opposite: Sanford Gifford, *Mt. Tacoma From Puget Sound, 1874*

flying visit to the Northwest (from Nootka, Cook sailed offshore to the Gulf of Alaska, sighting land to starboard but not stopping there), Spanish and British expeditions cruised through the region, proving the insularity of Vancouver Island and charting Puget Sound. The Spaniards shipped professional artists (Tomás de Suría, José Cardero, Atanásio Echeverría), whereas the English, under Captain George Vancouver, made do with the artistic efforts of a bunch of talented young midshipmen, including John Sykes, Harry

Humphrys, and Thomas Heddington. From the mass of sketches that came home to London and Madrid one can see something of the Pacific Northwest but much more of the tastes and interests prevailing among cultivated young Europeans in the last decade of the eighteenth century.

One catches the artists' excitement at the strange customs, costumes, and architecture of primitive man, and their elation at finding themselves in a real-life Salvator Rosa landscape, with all its shaggy cliffs, tangled woods, blasted trees, and lurid skies. Rosa, the Sicilian Baroque painter, was a great and much imitated favorite in Georgian England, where the novelist Tobias Smollett called his work "dreadfully picturesque." So the young men had a fine time, in their journals and sketchbooks, with granite precipices, waterfalls, and snowcapped peaks, as the land steepened around them along the Inside Passage.

Dread was in fashion in the 1790s, when the word "awful" still had a precise meaning, and images of the vertiginous crag, the dark forest, the storm at sea, were calculated to induce a delicious sensation of vicarious terror. It happened that the Pacific Northwest was discovered by whites just as the idea of the Romantic Sublime was gaining sway. The lonely and forbidding geography of the place perfectly fit the reigning conception of how a Romantic landscape ought to look. It conveniently combined, within a single view, the essential iconic features of the Swiss Alps, the German forest, and the English Lake District.

There was a single dissenting voice on the voyage—that of George Vancouver, known by his men (though never to his face) as Captain Van. At thirty-four, Vancouver was far behind his time. He was a provincial (from King's Lynn, in

Norfolk, where his father was employed by the Customs Service); his education had been mostly acquired at sea (he'd been one of Captain Cook's midshipmen); and the Sublime left him cold. His posthumously published *Voyage* (1798) gives a candid, heartfelt portrait of the Pacific Northwest as seen through the eyes of a young fogey who was out of touch with the intellectual currents of his age.

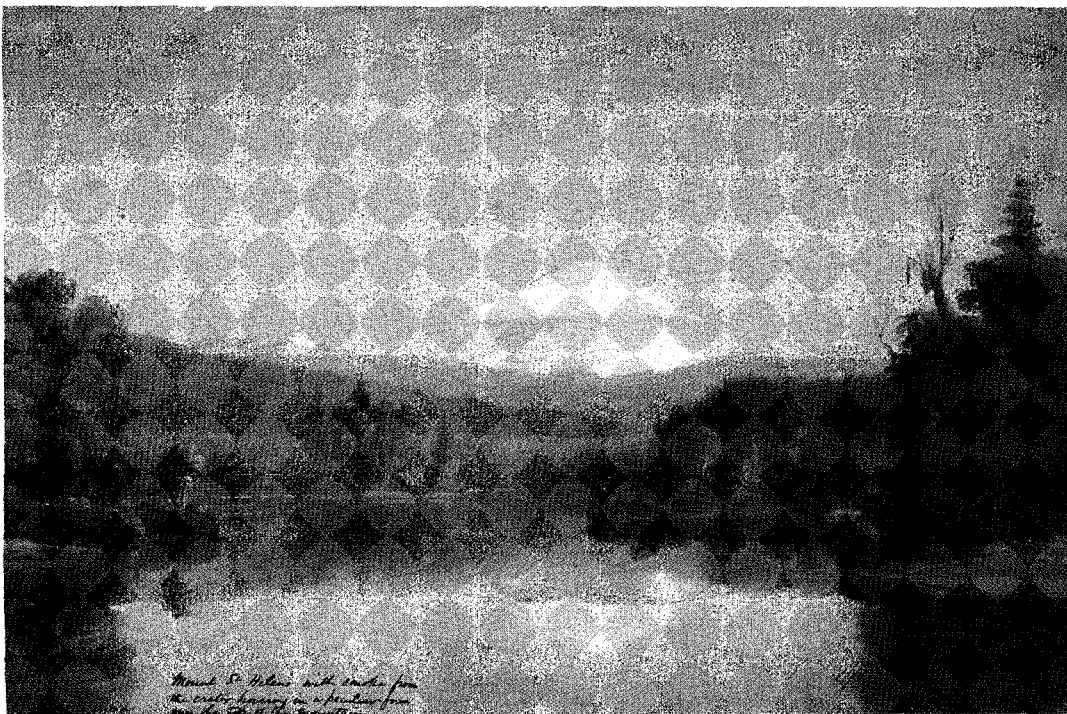
Captain Van took a great shine to Puget Sound and its surroundings. Among the low hills and forest clearings he was able to imagine himself in a reborn England of close-shaven lawns, artful vistas, rolling fields, and country houses. Remembering the stretch of coast over which the retirement homes of Sequim are now sprawled, he wrote,

The surface of the sea was perfectly smooth, and the country before us exhibited every thing that bounteous nature could be expected to draw into one point of view. As we had no reason to imagine that this country had ever been indebted for any of its decorations to the hand of man, I could not possibly believe that any uncultivated country had ever been discovered exhibiting so rich a picture.

But his pleasure in this newfound land soon curdled into repugnance as the expedition sailed north and west into the narrow, mountain-walled channels of the Inside Passage. While his juniors, along with the expedition naturalist, Archibald Menzies, thrilled to the dramatic sublimity of their surroundings, Vancouver recoiled from what he saw. The snowcapped peaks were "sterile," the cliffs of dripping rock and vertical forest were "barren," "dull," "gloomy," "dreary," "comfortless." Of the much admired

waterfalls he complained that their incessant noise made it impossible for him to hear any birdsong.

Vancouver's voice seems to come from the wrong end of the eighteenth century, when mountains were conventionally seen as rude geologic excrescences—chaotic, useless, and offensive to the mind and eye ("vast, undigested heaps of stone," as the theologian Thomas Burnet described the Alps in 1681). Yet most of the effusive paeans to the region's scenic grandeur conspicuously lack the real depth of feeling in Vancouver's response to a grim and spiritually corrosive landscape whose epicenter he



Paul Kane, Mount St. Helens With Smoke Cone, 1847

named Desolation Sound. Captain Van ought to be adopted as the patron saint of all northwesterners who have felt walled in by their mountain ranges, or suffered a jolt of depression when faced by the black monotony of the fir forest under a low, wintry, frog-spawn-colored sky.

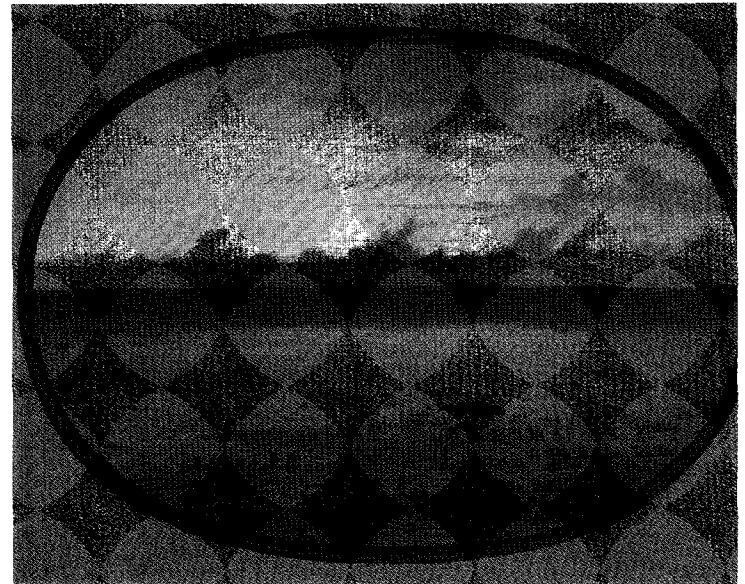
The back-of-beyond aspect of the Pacific Northwest heightened its romantic allure. Even after the Oregon Territory came within reach of the enterprising tourist, Washington and British Columbia remained comparatively remote. The famously grueling sea passage from Portland to Seattle was a serious deterrent, and it wasn't until James J. Hill's Northern Pacific Railroad at last arrived at its Tacoma terminus, in 1883, that Puget Sound became easily accessible to the casual traveler. In the meantime, a growing mystique attached itself to the area: people who had never been there spoke of it as the last resort of unspoiled wilderness, romantic solitude, and wild indigenous inhabitants.

It was the Indians who drew the Irish-Canadian painter Paul Kane to British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon on a long and adventurous trip in 1846–1847. But Kane's noble red men, alone with their primeval forest and steam-belching volcanic cones, are disappointingly generic, and look as if they stepped straight out of James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*. What Kane's pictures celebrate is, rather, the intrepidity of the artist—the solitary white man out in the Far West, ahead of the crowd, communing with primitive people in their natural state. His sketches and studio canvases document the progress of the artist as romantic hiker-hero. Kane's journey is the real subject; his Pacific Northwest is an adequately wild backdrop for a sequence of pictures in which one's attention instinctively fastens less on the land than on the personality of the painter.

In 1855, when the artist George Catlin was pushing sixty, he stopped in the Northwest, breaking a voyage that took him from Cape Horn to the Bering Sea. At the mouth of Clayoquot Sound, on the west coast of Vancouver Island, then as wild a site as any in the region, he painted a prophetic elegy on the fate of wilderness in an industrial, land-hungry age. *A Whale Ashore—Klahoquat* is as ambitious a painting as Catlin ever attempted—half moody seascape, half grim morality tale. Set against a troubled sunset over the Pacific, the stranded whale is not the only creature in the picture that is seeing its last day. The Indians swarming around the carcass, in canoes and on foot, are observed from such a distance that one can tell little about them except that they are members of the same species. They might just as well be a colony of prairie dogs. The swirling pattern made by the crowd on the beach has the organic coherence of a shoal of minnows or a flock of gulls. In the middle distance a trim schooner rides at anchor. A boat has just put off from it. On the far horizon, to the right of the schooner, is a flattened contrail from a steamship going south. Numerous as the Indians may appear, it's the smoke

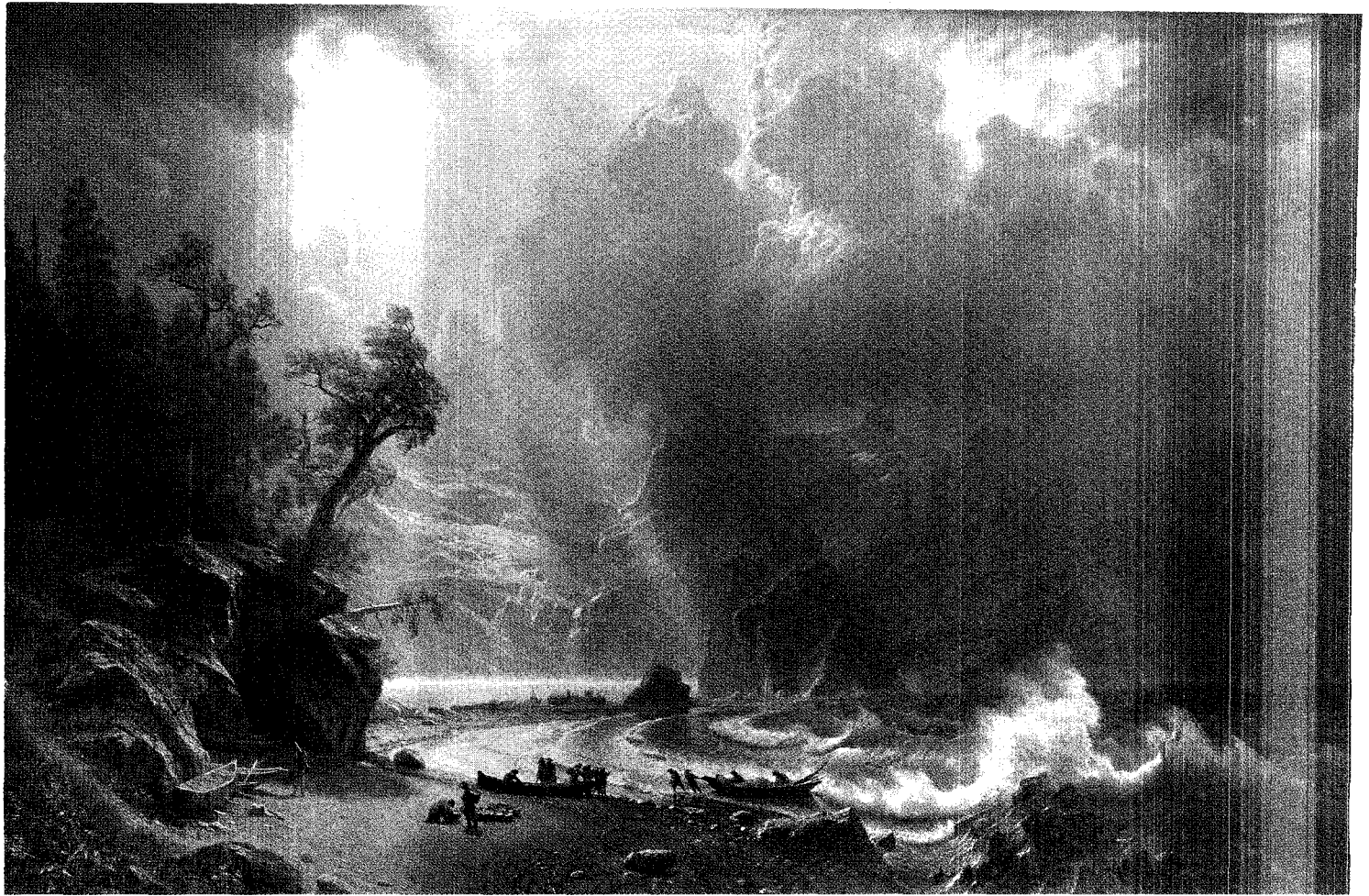
in the distance that signals the inevitable outcome of this story. Historically speaking, we are just seconds away from the arrival of the logging crew, the pulp mill, the cannery, and all the rest of the machinery that will change forever the life of the unsuspecting people on the beach.

Since 1830 Catlin had been chasing Indians westward across the plains, trying to capture them on canvas before they were swamped by the tide of white conquest and settlement. By 1855 great tracts of the land that he had known as wilderness had been claimed for civilization by the barbed-wire fence. That Catlin could see the Indians as doomed even here, in the last outpost of the truly wild, reveals the depth of the visionary pessimism he had acquired on his travels. And he was right, of course. Ten years before he stood above the beach at Clayoquot, the Hudson Bay Company had made Victoria its western headquarters; three years before, the Seattle city fathers had staked claim to their settlement on Elliott Bay. Catlin's nearing steamship was as unstoppable as the setting sun.



George Catlin, *A Whale Ashore—Klahoquat*, 1855/1869

The Indians in *A Whale Ashore* are squarely seen as part of the Pacific Northwest's nature, not its culture. It's no accident that one of the best collections of Native American art from the Northwest coast is housed not in the National Gallery but in the American Museum of Natural History, where the Salish, Haida, and Kwakiutl tribes take their place alongside stuffed elk and bison. In the basic grammar of nineteenth-century landscape painting, no stretch of Northwest water is complete without its canoeful of Indians—a native aquatic species whose presence gives the stamp of regional authenticity to a canvas. As the same water filled in real life with square-rigged lumber ships and steam tugs, its painted counterpart became an exclusionary zone in which white vessels were banned and only cedar canoes allowed.



Albert Bierstadt, Puget Sound, on the Pacific Coast, 1870

In 1863, on his second swing through the West in search of material for his enormous pictures of the American Sublime, Albert Bierstadt planned to visit Puget Sound. However, his companion, the journalist Fitz Hugh Ludlow, fell ill in Oregon, and the two men sailed instead from Portland to San Francisco, en route to New York. The unvisited territory evidently loomed large in Bierstadt's imagination, and in 1870 he produced a curious painting titled *Puget Sound, on the Pacific Coast*, in which he depicted a landscape of artistic myth and rumor, a Pacific Northwest de l'esprit.

By Bierstadt's usual seven-by-twelve-foot standards, the canvas is quite a modest one, but every last inch is packed to the bursting point with the stock ingredients of the Sublime, all lusciously painted in the artist's best theatrical style. Here are rocks, precipices, withered trees, the darkness of a howling storm, a shaft of golden sunshine of the kind that might herald the Second Coming, a thunderous cascade descending a mountain face, a turbulent and angry sea, and Indians, hauling their canoes to safety out of the exploding surf. The picture turns Puget Sound into a brand name for the dreadfully picturesque.

More effectively than the Oregon paintings that Bierstadt drew from the life, *Puget Sound, on the Pacific Coast* formulates the terms on which the Pacific Northwest made its appeal to the aesthetic tourist. The region was soon dotted with established vantage points offering painterly views of

the major landmarks: Mount Hood seen from the northwest bank of Lost Lake, Mount Adams seen from the Oregon side of the Columbia River, Mount Rainier seen from across Commencement Bay, on Puget Sound. It was a quickly established convention that Northwest water—river, lake, or branch of the sea—was sufficiently still to hold a faithful reflection of a mountain for hours at a time. This despite Bierstadt's suggestion that Puget Sound waves break on the shore like those of the Mediterranean in a full gale.

Sanford Gifford, a Luminist painter and a close friend of Bierstadt's, was another early visitor. In 1874 he pitched his easel on what I take to be the beach on the southeastern tip of Vashon Island and painted Mount Rainier mirrored in the lakelike water of Commencement Bay. The snow-capped summit, rose-tinted in the light of a late-summer afternoon, rises above a layer of hazy cloud like an apparition, or (in Gifford's own terms) a manifestation of the divine. The water is made radiant by the diffused brilliance of the mountain's reflection. On the scored-glass surface of the bay float two Salish canoes. On the far shore the most prominent trees are as green and, more surprisingly, deciduous as any in Gifford's English and Hudson River landscapes. It's a picture of an undisturbed American Arcadia, in which Indians—with their pathless woods, their peaceful water, and their inspiring alp—are seen to be living apparently beyond the reach of time.

It's Gifford's determined erasures that catch the eye. Gone (from the patch of land immediately above the canoe in the foreground) is the young town of Tacoma, with its new lumber mill, new docks, and fleet of moored cargo ships. Gifford's lovely Arcadia, so seemingly present, belongs to an imagined past, and the painting is suffused with nostalgia for a period that never really was, when bushy elms grew out over the water, and Indians were the nymphs and shepherds of European pastoral tradition.

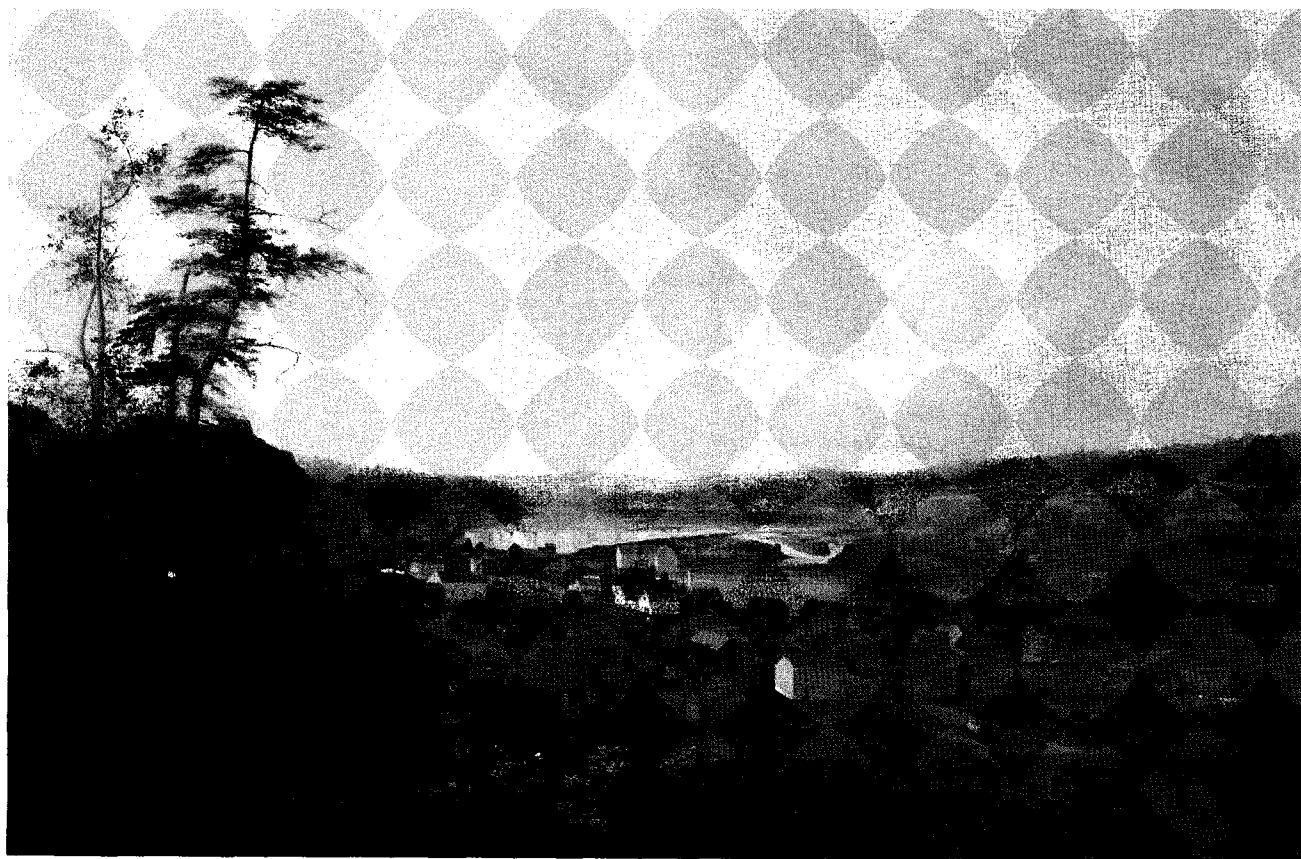
Fifteen years after Gifford painted Mount Rainier, Bierstadt at last reached Puget Sound, having completed a painting tour of southeastern Alaska. Camped out on what appears to be the same spot that Gifford had used for his view of the mountain, Bierstadt set to work. By 1889 Tacoma had grown to a smoke-and-steam-wreathed city of 30,000 people. Bierstadt obliterated it from his vision. To accentuate the enchanted solitude of the scene, he painted just one Indian canoe in place of Gifford's two.

It should not be thought that Bierstadt took no interest in the great industrial developments of his time. He was acutely sensitive to them. His major patrons were financial, timber, mineral, and railroad magnates for whom Bierstadt's pictures (like those of Thomas Moran) were grandiose souvenirs of the West as it had been before their own work crews landscaped it to the industrialists' design. When Bierstadt finished his Rainier painting, in his New York studio, he sent a hopeful letter to James J. Hill. Mount Tacoma (the alter-

native name for Rainier) was, he wrote, "one of the grandest of mountains," and it was happily situated "on the line of your road." The railroad baron didn't bite.

In a spirited counteroffensive to the idea of Manifest Destiny, the Romantic painters made it their great mission to depopulate the Northwest of all but its aboriginal inhabitants. It was left largely to amateurs—and, interestingly, to painters of Indian scenes such as Catlin and John Mix Stanley—to tell the other side of the story. No one had a keener sense of the fantastic pace of white settlement and industry than the artists who spent their lives searching for authentic Indians in the ever decreasing wild.

Though John Mix Stanley specialized in Indian portraits, he was an accomplished, if conventional, landscape painter. His *Oregon City on the Willamette River* (c. 1850) is a conspicuously fair-minded treatment of the theme. The Sublime survives in the immediate foreground, where a bluff overlooks the Willamette Valley, but it has mostly been exiled to the back of the canvas, where sandstone cliffs and thick forest frame a splendid river-wide waterfall. Sandwiched between wilderness in the distance and wilderness nearby lies an infant city of neat rectangular plots and newly painted houses, dominated by an English-style church and a three-story sawmill. Covered wagons are rolling down Main Street. The low light is falling from the east; it's early morning, and this is just the beginning



John Mix Stanley, Oregon City on the Willamette River, c. 1850



Emily Inez Denny, Untitled/Smith's Cove, 1880s

of what is going to happen to Oregon in the near future.

Cut to the figures on the bluff—still in shadow, for the morning hasn't reached them: two Indians, a man and a woman, with what looks like a bedroll between them. The man is leaning on a staff, so he's a pilgrim, or a vagrant. Both figures look directly at the viewer. They might be homeless people on a modern street, begging passersby for change. With hindsight, we know where the couple are headed. In 1857 Stanley painted an allegory titled *Last of Their Race*, in which ten Indians, wearing the costumes of different tribes, are perched on a pile of rocks at the edge of the Pacific Ocean, their last toehold on the West that was once their domain.

Yet Stanley rendered the fatal city so affectionately that the painting seems to shimmer with ambiguity, like a hologram changing shape as it is tilted under a light. Now you're with the Indians, now you're with the whites. At first glance the picture looks like an advertisement for the civic pleasures that await travelers at the end of the Oregon Trail; it promises space to build and to breathe amid tranquil natural surroundings—a school for one's children, a waterfall to delight one's eye. At second glance that cheerful promise seems callow and heartless—but not so callow, or so heartless, that it cancels out one's first impression. As in the hologram, both images are equally there, but never quite at the same time.

In the 1880s an amateur, Emily Inez Denny, a member of one of Seattle's founding families, took the robust, monoc-

ular view of settlement in a painting of Smith's Cove, on Elliott Bay. The artist is standing in the middle of a stump field, where timber is being logged to make way for future development. (The space just behind her will turn, eventually, into a chain-link-fenced compound for imported Japanese cars, fresh out of their containers.) Beyond the field lie the already substantial accomplishments of Denny's ingenious, hardworking family and friends: a handsome homestead, with barns, outbuildings, and an orchard; ships, under steam and sail, in the harbor; a locomotive hauling a line of cars on the railroad, which is carried on trestles over the shallows at the north end of the bay; two horse-and-buggy outfits, heading into town down a southeast-trending lane. The sky is dominated by a roiling billow of steam, issuing from the impossibly tall smokestack of a mill somewhere over on Vashon Island, or beyond. Emily Denny's picture, with its proud detailing of modes of transportation, makes that most poignant of provincial boasts: we may seem to live miles from anywhere, but we are really *very* well connected. In that respect her painting is bang up-to-date 120 years later.

Denny's work belongs to a tradition of vernacular landscape which includes picture-postcard photographs of the Pacific Northwest. Photographers and painters used many of the same views and vantage points, but these coincident locations serve only to expose the huge rift between their visions of the land. Turn-of-the-century postcards abhor solitude. They represent nature as a resource, for industry



Postcard depictions of Mt. Hood (top) and Mt. Rainier

and for recreation. One wonders what Bierstadt, for instance, would have made of the diagonal line of twenty-five people “nature coasting” down a snowy slope of Mount Rainier and waving to the camera as they slide by. Every river has its fisherman, every lakeshore has its picnic table. A postcard from Oregon shows Mount Hood mirrored in Lost Lake, a favorite view of painters—but here a man in a bush hat sits in the foreground cradling a gun, as if he were about to unzip the reflection with a bullet. Mountain scenes afford a pretty backdrop for early Oldsmobiles and Fords, shown parked on dirt tracks in the heart of the Sublime.

As the postcards promote the luxury hotels, the parks, the zoos, and the electric lighting of the new cities, so they take a boosterish line on the sources of the cities’ wealth. Loggers are represented as gnarled western heroes, grinning widely from halfway up the trunk of some monarch of the forest, which they are about to dethrone. Massive barks of cut timber, a hundred feet long and seven feet square, are captioned “Washington Tooth Picks.” A class of twenty-five grade school children is shown sitting atop the flat stump of a single logged cedar. Bridges, ships, farms, mills, and railroads figure on the postcards as triumphs of civilization over the wilderness—a wilderness that by 1905 or thereabouts could already be thought of as a lavish extension of a civic park, to be valued in terms of its facilities for tourism and sport.

A postcard from a later date—circa 1950—qualifies as one of the few iconic Northwest landscapes. It shows the

vast glaciated extrusion of Mount Rainier, grandly outclassed by a B-17 Flying Fortress that appears to be cruising directly over the summit. Here is the awe-inspiring, Seattle-manufactured Technological Sublime, putting nature in its place. The dormant volcano and the Boeing bomber are up to the same deadly waiting game. This was the card to send, with love, to Moscow.

The most powerful and dramatic landscapist of the Northwest was the timber industry, which has turned the forested mountainsides into a new kind of wilderness, of skid roads, stumps, and slash. I saw my first clear-cut eleven years ago, when I was out here on a visit. It was unexpectedly stirring to see the sheer totalitarian scale of damage that the chain saw can inflict, and the sight ranks in memory somewhere alongside my first view of the Manhattan skyline, or of the Pyramid of Cheops, as one of the great eccentric wonders of mankind. I understand perfectly why Paul Bunyan was a leading mythological god in the American pantheon, before his activities came to be regarded as commensurate with spilling oil and dumping untreated sewage.

No sooner had the Pacific Northwest been established as the last outpost of the Sublime than it was recast as a battlefield in the war between man and nature. The loose group of Seattle-based painters whom *Life* magazine would in 1953 label “The Northwest School”—Morris Graves, Mark Tobey, Guy Anderson, and Kenneth Callahan—lived within view of the clear-cuts. If their best-known work leans toward the calm restraint and stylization of Japanese and Zen Buddhist art, that may be—in part, at least—a response to the violence and upheaval that figure so prominently in their early paintings. Against Graves’s later, light-infused and delicate studies of birds, animals, and potted plants should be set his *Logged Mountains*, painted from 1935 to 1943.



Morris Graves, *Logged Mountains*, 1935–1943

The upstanding dead and withered trunks left by the loggers are identical twins to the lightning-blasted trees found in the spooky landscapes of Salvator Rosa, such as *Mercury and the Dishonest Woodman* and *Landscape With Tobias and the Angel* (both in the British National Gallery, in London). But they are the least of it. The land itself has turned into slurry; it's pouring in a viscous, yellowish-green waterfall right through the bottom of the painting. The grand cascade, central to Romantic pictures of the Northwest in the nineteenth century, has here been perverted into a Niagara of waste. The draining land leaves behind bare chunks of rock, like rotten molars, under a stormy and sinister sky. The dominant colors—russet, ocher, greens that verge on black—are the true colors of Washington as seen by an unillusioned resident rather than by tourists like Gifford and Bierstadt.

Graves was only describing what actually happens when a mountain is indiscriminately logged and its drainage system wrecked: it turns into a mudslide. His landscape—as dreadful as anything conceived by the Romantics—is based on close observation. Similarly, *House in a Landscape* (believed to date from the 1930s), his exquisitely precise depiction of a collapsing homestead, its timbers warped and splayed as the house melts back into the earth, is at once a bold statement about the decay of human hopes in an unkind land and a cool exercise in pure draftsmanship. In both paintings one feels Graves's fierce intimacy with his region and its areas of darkness. This is a northwesterner's bleak version of the Northwest—and it is little wonder that Graves later escaped into the light and airy

simplicity of his post-1960s work. It's not for nothing that rainy Seattle leads the country in the per capita sale of sunglasses.

The response of Graves's friend and colleague Kenneth Callahan to the clear-cuts was a sequence of big, almost Bierstadt-sized canvases that tip their caps ironically to the Romantic Sublime: same mountains, same rivers, same forest—except that the forest has been stripped from the picture, and the landscape rendered in a monochromatic muddy brown and littered with the machinery of the timber industry, so that it recalls a strange, alpine version of the battlefields of the Marne and the Somme. One might expect to see the tin hats of dead soldiers hung on the crosslike projections of Callahan's surviving stumps.

In the 1940s, before he entered his squiggly, Zen-inspired, drip-painted white-writing phase, Mark Tobey was paying close attention to the art of the Northwest-coast Indians, as in his *Drums, Indians and The Word* (1944). Since John Webber first sketched at Nootka, Indians had often been in the foreground of Northwest landscapes, as the obligatory *genii loci* of the region, but their art had made only incidental appearances, in the form of carved and painted canoes, house posts, totem poles, and embroidered hats. The rediscovery of primitive art was part of the core curriculum of twentieth-century Modernism, with Braque and Picasso rivaling each other in their extensive collections of Amerindian and Pacific-island trophies. Borrowing from the stylized and abstract vision of the world as represented in tribal art became a Modernist

mannerism, and on the Northwest coast the white artist had immediate access to an extraordinary body of native work. The art of the Kwakiutl, Haida, Tsimshian, and Tlingit Indians was as vital, strange, and complex as any in the world. On bentwood boxes, muslin wall hangings, housefronts, masks, and domestic equipment the Indians left their own, often highly enigmatic, landscapes of the Pacific Northwest—a great treasury of techniques and images to which twentieth-century white artists began freely to help themselves.

Tobey—like Morris Graves, who took on Oregon—accepted a commission to paint Washington for a United States series that was funded from 1946 to 1949 by the Container Corporation of America. Graves's *Oregon* is a delicate, feathery, Japanese-looking study of



Kenneth Callahan, Northwest Landscape, 1934



Mark Tobey, *Washington*, 1946

northwestern evergreens. Tobey's *Washington* is an intensely busy Indian-inspired pictographic puzzle, like the totemic heraldry on a Kwakiutl painted chest. It's a labyrinth of interlocking rectangles, each one packed with images and symbols, on a ground as luminously gray as a Seattle sky. Inside the rectangles are dozens of ovoids or "eye shapes"—the basic building blocks of Northwest-coast Native American design. As with a Kwakiutl chest, the painting demands to be "read" by the viewer, and, as with the chest, some of its meanings readily disclose themselves whereas others appear to be deeply secretive and private. One sees immediately the salmon, the Pike Place Market scene, the seascape with a sailboat, the tribal masks, but the larger code is not so easily cracked. On one level the painting resolves into a game of Can You Spot (... the killer whale? canoes? logs? mountains? the Indian bird-rattle? Skagit Valley tulips? the artist in his studio? the oyster? clams?). On another it's a palimpsest—writing-on-writing, some legible and strongly foregrounded, some faint and obscure, with the whole composition giving the impression of infinitely recessive depth. More than any other painting in the Container Corporation series, *Washington* succeeds in condensing an entire American state—its nature, industry, and recreations—into a square of paperboard; and it does so by summoning the aid of the state's aboriginal inhabitants, whose art informs the whole conception of the piece.

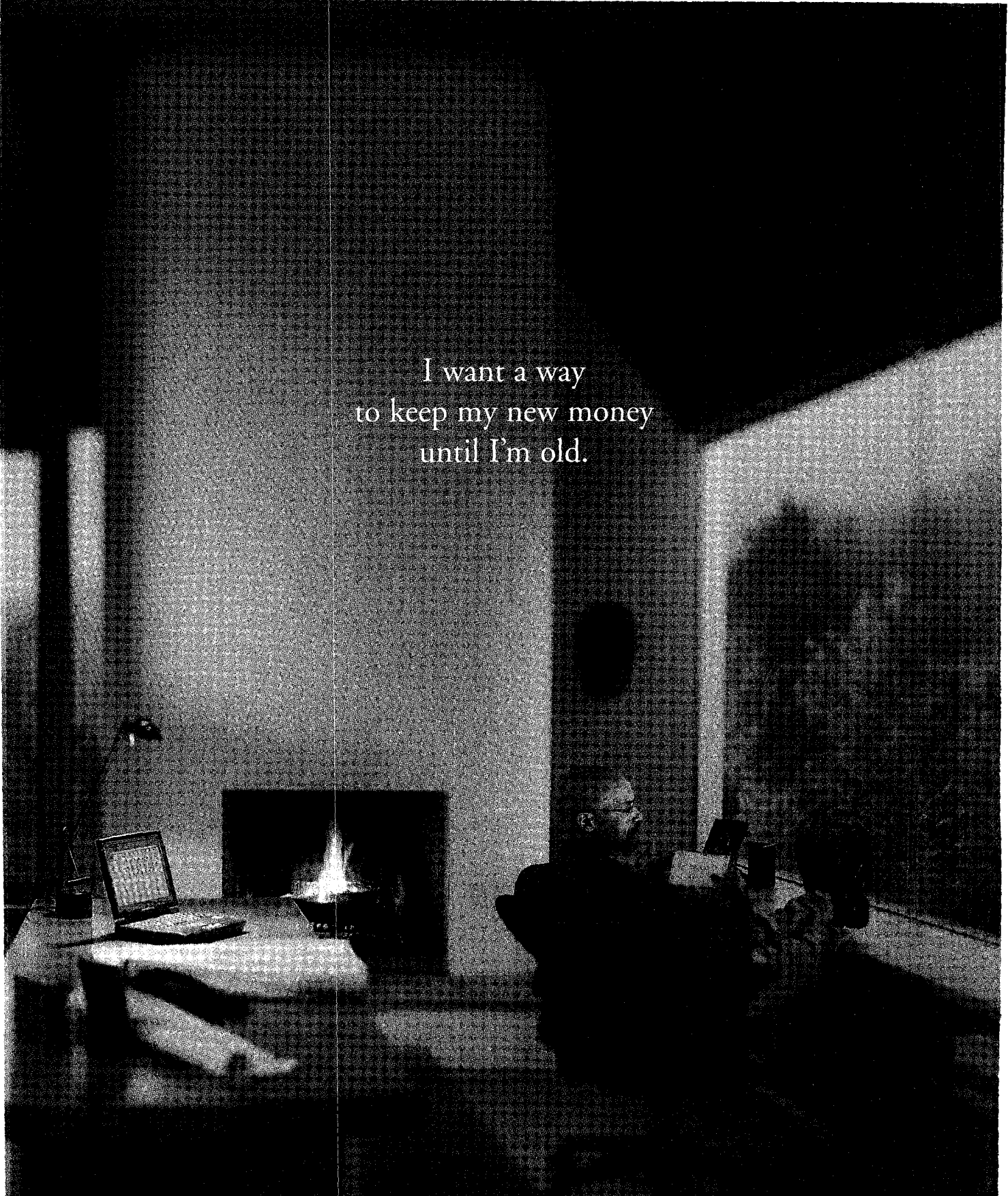
It was Tobey who nagged at Emily Carr, a British Columbian painter, to get the Indian-folklore material out of her pictures. After training in Paris, where she fell for the work of Derain and the Fauvists, and after a long spell in an English mental hospital, where she filled an aviary with



Emily Carr, *Forest, B.C.*, 1931-1932

British songbirds, hoping to import them to Vancouver Island, Carr traveled through coastal British Columbia, painting Indian canoes, house posts, and totem poles in the forest. In 1930, when he was forty and she was fifty-nine, Tobey appointed himself Carr's mentor and critic, advising her to drop the Indian subjects and follow his lead into greater abstraction. The famously spiky Carr was not a natural follower. "Clever but his work has no soul," she remarked of Tobey in her journal (published posthumously as *Hundreds and Thousands* [1966]).

Though Tobey's opinion of her work rankled, it evidently made its mark, because the canoes and totem poles began to disappear from Carr's canvases, allowing the turbulent shapes of the forest itself to emerge as her great subject. Before, she had concentrated on re-creating, in two dimensions, the swooping curves and expressive distortions of carved figures like Raven and Thunderbird. After about 1930 the foliage of the fir forest, and its undergrowth of bracken, blackberry, and salal, became for her a kind of painted sculpture in its own right. Every leaf and twig looks chiseled, in Indian house-post style, and Carr's forest is thick with fortuitous visual echoes of the mythological creatures who dominated her earlier paintings—especially Dzonogwa,

A black and white photograph of a man sitting at a desk in a dimly lit room. The man is wearing glasses and is looking towards the right. On the desk, there is a laptop and some papers. In the background, there is a fireplace with a fire burning. The room has a high ceiling and a large window on the right side. The overall atmosphere is quiet and contemplative.

I want a way
to keep my new money
until I'm old.

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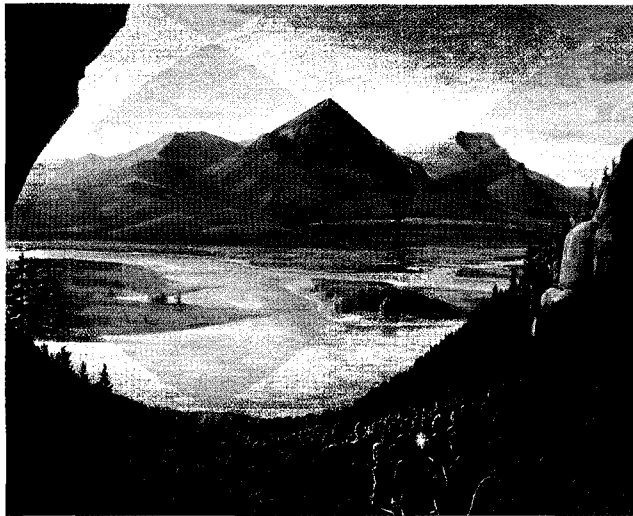


the female Kwakiutl child-stealer; Raven; and Eagle. This is animistic nature—a realm of gross and copious fecundity, where powerful half-seen beings live in the shadows.

In her journal Carr took a dim view of people who “stay outside [the forest] and talk about its beauty.”

Nobody goes there. Why? Few have anything to go for. The loneliness repels them, the density, the unsafe hidden footing, the dank smells, the great quiet, the mystery, the general mix-up (tangle, growth, what may be hidden there), the insect life. They are repelled by the awful solemnity of the age-old trees, with the wisdom of all their years of growth looking down upon you, making you feel perfectly infinitesimal—their overpowering weight, their groanings and creekings [sic], mutterings and sighings—the rot and decay of the old ones—the toadstools and slugs ...

If this passage seems to be at least as much about the dank and smelly mystery of sex as about trees, so do Carr’s paintings—though the explicit sexuality of her forest is far from being its only signification. In August of 1937 she wrote of an unfinished picture of the woods, “It all depends on the sweep and swirl and I have not got it yet.” In her best paintings the



Michael Brophy, *People's View*, 1999

forest is literally a whirlpool of meanings, in a state of constant dissolution and recombination. Sex is to be found there, but so are worship, peaceful refuge, fear, revulsion, beauty, power, pathos. It’s a complex and accommodating place, which answers equally to, say, George Vancouver’s desolation and the Romantic sense of wonder. It seems as close as any white artist or writer has ever come to the Indian version of the Northwest forest as it appears in the native stories collected by Franz Boas and other early anthropologists.

The Pacific Northwest is now entangled in a rancorous quarrel about landscape: “Wise Use” has become a sly euphemism for chain-saw liberation; farmers rally to protest the reintroduction of wolves into the mountains; salmon-first conservationists plan on dynamiting the hydroelectric dams about which Woody Guthrie used to sing.

Here’s a contemporary Pacific Northwest landscape: On the Olympic Peninsula the carcass of a northern spotted owl was found nailed to a fence post. The bird had been expertly shot with a high-powered small-caliber rifle. Beside it was pinned a typewritten note, or caption: “If you think your parks and wildernesses don’t have enough of these suckers, plant this one.” The anonymous artist left behind two beer cans, a Band-Aid, and a spent match.

This stretch of land has been so fought over, painted and repainted, laden with partisan and contradictory meanings, that it tends to invite the response of a tired postmodern shrug. A recent *New Yorker* cartoon by David Sipress shows a vacationing couple standing beside their RV atop a dizzy precipice, from which they’re looking down at the usual natural amenities of the Pacific Northwest—fir trees, mountains, waterfalls, winding trails. The man, in baggy tartan shorts and wraparound sunglasses, is saying to the woman, “So this is the famous environment everyone’s so hyped up about?”

It’s “the famous environment” that the Portland artist Michael Brophy depicts with sardonic cool in *People's View*. At the turn of the twenty-first century Brophy has achieved the ambition of every nineteenth-century Romantic painter: he has voided the land of its people. Not even a solitary Indian disturbs his denuded Northwest, with its lonely geology, water, and dark-green vegetation—though field lines and bridges survive, and the hills have been largely shorn of their timber. Nature (or what little is now left of nature) has become a prettily lit stage set, from which the audience has been divorced by a proscenium arch. In the immediate foreground of the picture the spectators are assembled, their backs to the painter—a dense crowd of urban types, in Birkenstocks and earth-toned leisurewear from Eddie Bauer. We’re in there too, dutifully gazing at this empty spectacle, this picture of a picture, which is what the Pacific Northwest has become. We’re in exactly the same position as the people who look at the sea in Robert Frost’s poem:

They cannot look out far.
They cannot look in deep.
But when was that ever a bar
To any watch they keep? ❧

This essay will appear, in somewhat different form, as the introduction to the anthology *The Pacific Northwest Landscape: A Painted History*, edited by Katharine Harmon, to be published next summer by Sasquatch Books. The images in this article are reproduced with the permission of the following: page 40, Bank of America Art Collection; page 41, The British Library, London (Add.15514.10); page 42, oil on paper, 8 1/8 x 13 3/8", Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas; page 43, Paul Mellon Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., photo ©2000 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art; page 44, The Seattle Art Museum, gift of the Friends of American Art at the Seattle Art Museum with additional funds from the General Acquisition Fund, photo by Howard Giske; page 45, oil on canvas, 26 1/2 x 40", Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas (1979.17); page 46, Museum of History and Industry, Seattle, photo by Howard Giske; page 47, top, from *Greetings From Oregon*, by Gideon Bosker and Jonathan Nicholas, Graphic Arts Center Publishing; below, from *Greetings From Washington*, by Lane Morgan, Graphic Arts Center Publishing; lower right, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; page 48, The Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, photo by Paul Macapia; page 49, top left, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; top right, oil on canvas, Vancouver Art Gallery, Emily Carr Trust (VAC 42.3.9), photo by Trevor Mills; page 52, Linda Hodges Gallery, Seattle, and the Laura Russo Gallery, Portland.

WHO NEEDS THE BBC?

The British Broadcasting Corporation is having a hard time living up to its past. But what a past! Our correspondent reviews its history, seeking the roots of its present troubles

BY GEOFFREY WHEATCROFT

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Not many sets of initials became universally recognizable during the twentieth century, and those that did often had ominous overtones, from SS to KGB. Foreigners know some American initials better than others (CIA and FBI, say, rather than IRS or SAT), and an Englishman doesn't suppose that every American recognizes LSE or QPR. But everyone knows the BBC. You need only to say it the local way—*bay-bay-say* in France, *bee-bee-chee* in Italy—to be instantly understood. Leonard Slatkin is the first American to become chief conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra. He was no doubt thinking of his own country when he said after his recent appointment that those three letters have a magical ring.

The reputation of the British Broadcasting Corporation can be truly vexing, at any rate to its competitors. Although the BBC's monopoly on British television ended more than forty years ago, people outside our damp little island don't seem to have grasped that. Crews from the other British television companies always report that they get the same response when working in America: "So, you guys are from the BBC." "No, actually, we're Granada" (or ITN, or LWT, or whoever). "Yeah, British TV—the BBC."

But it isn't only resentful professionals from rival companies who now wonder if the BBC's reputation may not be a shadow—albeit an awfully big shadow—of former glories. The past year has seen turmoil at the corporation's London headquarters and heavy criticism of the BBC as an institution, not for the first time but in a manner more insidious and damaging than ever. Some of the criticism is political, and politically partisan, but more of it addresses the deeper question of purpose. The BBC's domestic output has grown so varied that generalizing about it makes little sense, and that raises the question of whether preserving the corporation as a single entity makes sense.

The BBC's international standing was hard-earned. There is a worldwide BBC television network, competing



so far not very effectively with CNN and other satellite companies, but more than 150 million people around the world listen to BBC World Service radio, which was long famous for its integrity, high standards, and unembroidered, unsensationalized news. American addicts now complain that this once splendid station shows signs of decline—the result of what those who engage in it call promoting greater accessibility and the rest of us call dumbing down. These critics may have a point.

Certainly the BBC's position is peculiar. Its founding concept was one of "public-service broadcasting" a phrase with both an elevating and a patronizing ring. As long as it was the only broadcaster in the country, it could do as it liked, without giving any thought to the audience. Now it competes in a marketplace, though without being driven by the commercial imperatives of a market; and it has to chase viewers and listeners, though without making any money from them: most of its income derives from the license fees levied on television sets whether the owners watch the BBC or not. It's an odd and unsatisfactory arrangement.

The BBC's origins are likewise unsatisfactory, and also curious. Radio was born as a mass medium in the 1920s. How different countries responded to its arrival vividly illustrated their differing political cultures. America had a free market (at the very beginning federal and state governments didn't even regulate wavelengths, which were held by squatters' rights). In most European countries the state soon established a broadcasting monopoly under its own direction. Appropriately enough in the age when the business of America was business, American radio became wholeheartedly commercial. Appropriately enough in the age of totalitarianism, European radio became a prime vehicle for party propaganda and indoctrination.

As usual, the British way fell somewhere in between. After a very brief experiment with commercially sponsored broadcasting—a concert of songs by the diva Dame Nellie

Melba, in 1920—a privately owned British Broadcasting Company began in 1922 with an exclusive license. In 1927 it became the British Broadcasting Corporation, a state firm ostensibly kept at arm's length from the government by a board of directors (appointed by the government, of course), and financed, in what was meant to be a high-minded and detached fashion, by fees exacted from all owners of what were then called wireless sets. Advertising was unknown and unthinkable.

As the historian A.J.P. Taylor observed in *English History 1914–1945* (1965), this arrangement suited both political parties: “Conservatives liked authority; Labour disliked private enterprise.” It should be said that Taylor was bitterly hostile to the BBC, owing to clashes of his own with the corporation, and that such hostility colored his contemptuous and absurd dismissal of even the BBC's contribution to musical life. But his claim that for years it rarely aired controversial views is harder to deny.

The BBC was the bland leading the bland, tending almost unconsciously to take an establishment view. It certainly supported the reigning dynasty, in whose reinvention as a wholesome model of family life the corporation played no small part, with, for example, the monarch's Christmas Day broadcasts, which began with George V. Presiding over the BBC's formative years was John Reith, a stern Scotch Calvinist much mocked as a cultural dictator and a prude. James Thurber described another prude, Harold Ross, of *The New Yorker*, as the only man he'd ever known who spelled out euphemisms in front of adults: Ross would say of some couple in the office, “I'm sure he's s-l-e-e-p-i-n-g with her.” In Reith's day radio announcers were expected to wear dinner jackets in front of the microphone, and any employee suspected of a-d-u-l-t-e-r-y was fired immediately.

Rare incidents interrupted this decorum. In the 1930s there was a nighttime review of the Royal Navy, with a former naval officer providing the commentary. As he repeated the words “The fleet's lit up ... now it's gone” over and again in slurred tones, it became clear that he was in no state to continue, and he was cut short. The episode caused much public merriment and doubtless shocked Reith. (Funnily enough, it's often easier to tell on radio than on television when someone is drunk, though I do have a happy memory of Brendan Behan visibly sozzled on BBC television.)

Altogether Reith did not encourage dissent; he had a very exalted conception of his own importance; and he was obsessed by the BBC's mission to educate and improve its audience. In hindsight he doesn't seem so contemptible. He was a man of great ability, who truly believed in the grandiose slogan posted in the lobby of Broadcasting House, north of Oxford Circus: NATION SHALL SPEAK PEACE UNTO NATION. And he believed just as passionately in the Victorian principle that we must educate our masters—the “demos” who should be fitted for democracy.

It may be that the BBC's true golden age began with World War II, after Reith's departure. From 1939 to 1945 the BBC became a national institution, as the British people gathered, in defeat and in victory, for the news at 9:00 P.M. Given that the country was engaged in a total war for survival, the news was remarkable for its honesty and objectivity. Those days still resonate. Although I wasn't yet born, let alone listening, at the time, I have folk memories of the wartime BBC, from Winston Churchill's great speeches in 1940 to Wynford Vaughan-Thomas reporting from a Lancaster bomber over Berlin in 1943 and Richard Dimbleby almost speechless with horror at liberated Bergen-Belsen in 1945. The war years also saw the BBC become a national institution in terms of entertainment, from serious music (there was a principled resolve to continue playing German composers, whatever the latest corruptions of Kultur) to popular comedy, most famously *ITMA* (*It's That Man Again*), another folk memory, a quite indescribable variety program combining absurd sketches, catchphrases, and songs, and drawing on two authentic English traditions: the music hall and nonsense humor. Radio comedy has remained one of the most distinctive voices of the BBC ever since, with a long line of brilliant series.

At this point I should perhaps follow the practice of the House of Commons and declare an interest. Apart from the occasional appearance, pontificating on some topic or other for a minuscule fee, I have never worked for the BBC, but I seem to be surrounded by its employees. My sister used to be a senior BBC-TV executive, like her former husband; my other brother-in-law (wife's brother) directs art programs, and my late father-in-law, Frank Muir, belongs to the corporation's calendar of saints. Muir began writing for the BBC just after the war, and he and his partner of fifty years, Denis Norden, practically invented the zany radio sitcom years before they created their delightfully dotty language program, *My Word!*, which had a considerable American following. Their shows were laced with a clever and allusive humor in the manner of P.G. Wodehouse. I've often met people who remember fragments of their *Take It From Here* from more than forty years ago, such as the sketch, lasting only a minute or so, in which a Roman legion is being drilled on the parade ground by a centurion who bawls, “All right ... by the right—number awf!” and is answered “Eye!” “Eye-eye!” “Eye-eye-eye!” “Eye-vee!”

Another wartime development made the BBC the greatest of all international broadcasters. Radio was widely used for propaganda, although there were significant local variations. Well before the war every German knew the sound of Hitler's voice from his ranting orations, but the Russians didn't know Stalin's voice until he broadcast for the first time, after the Soviet Union was invaded, in July of 1941. His listeners must have been taken aback by his Georgian accent, just as the Japanese were bemused by their Emperor's lilting court intonation when he broadcast for the



A BBC announcer in 1931, wearing the requisite dinner jacket

first time, after the bombing of Hiroshima, announcing the coming surrender in the memorably meiotic words “The war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan’s advantage.”

Because shortwave transmissions can cross frontiers and even circle the globe, one country after another began to use radio for external as well as internal propaganda. During the war Germany beamed disheartening news at England—read by William Joyce, aka Lord Haw-Haw—while Ezra Pound spewed anti-Semitic bile from Rome. And as the war progressed, the BBC found itself broadcasting internationally, in English (with George Orwell working for the Indian Service) and forty other languages—messages of hope to occupied Europe in French, Czech, and Danish, news bulletins and discussions in Spanish, Arabic, and Hindi.

In Dean Acheson’s phrase, Great Britain lost an empire without finding a role, and by the 1950s something of the same was true of the BBC. There was a fierce campaign to start an alternative, advertising-financed television channel. Nowadays the utter worthlessness of American television is an article of faith in chattering-class England, uniting the anti-American left with cultural conservatives. (As a pretty good Schubert-and-Tiepolo-loving culture snob myself, I would say that if American television can give us *The Simpsons* and *The Sopranos*, it isn’t doing badly.) But it’s interesting to find that back in the 1950s someone like the critic Kenneth Tynan—politically very much part of the anti-American left—not only supported commercial television but also insisted on the superiority, cultural as well as technical, of American television.

The BBC excited the admiration of a certain type of anglophile American, and in the case of BBC radio not without reason. If there was one thing that justified the BBC's exalted reputation when I was growing up, it was *The Listener*. This was a weekly magazine that looked very much like *The Spectator* and the *New Statesman*—or *The New Republic* and *The Nation*—of those days, but most of its contents were taken from BBC broadcasts. Writing in 1956, Dwight Macdonald (a distinctly if not besottedly anglophile American) said sourly that in America a magazine on such a level as that of *The Listener* and drawn from a similar source would have to appear not weekly but annually.

At the time, Macdonald was living in London and was formulating his theory of culture, high, low, and middle—or, as he called them, High Culture, Masscult (“a parody of High Culture”), and Midcult, which “pretends to respect the standards of High Culture while in fact it waters them down and vulgarizes them.” To his great amusement, the BBC then had three radio stations exactly fitting his pattern: the Light Programme (Masscult), the Home Service (Midcult), and the “tactfully named” Third Programme (High Culture). The Third Programme was uncompromisingly and brilliantly highbrow. One could turn on an opera relay from London or Vienna or a superb concert—maybe played by the BBC's own symphony orchestra, which over the years gave the British premiere of such works as Schoenberg's *Erwartung* and Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony—and hear an interval talk given by Bertrand Russell or E. M. Forster. Plainly, the service was not run on a commercial basis; its employees thought it bad form even to discuss ratings, and working for it was regarded as a privilege. The story goes that when a venerable scholar had given a talk on some ineffably esoteric subject, the producer said to him as he was leaving, “The fee will be fifteen guineas, Professor,” and the don replied, “Very good, and to whom shall I make the cheque?”

For anyone who grew up in England in the quarter century after the war, the Third Programme and *The Listener* were rivaled only by Penguin paperbacks as profoundly influential conduits of unofficial education. In his recent memoir, *A Short Walk Down Fleet Street*, the veteran political columnist Alan Watkins describes his boyhood in a South Wales mining village, whence he won a university place in 1950. Fifty years on he remains convinced that more than anything else, it was reading the series *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians*, which *The Listener* printed from the Third Programme, that got him into Cambridge.

With the best will, none of that is any longer true of the BBC. What happened? Why, television happened. The corporation actually pioneered television broadcasting before the war (and suspended the new medium for the duration, to start again in 1946), but in the 1950s BBC television was left behind technically by American television. It has continued intermittently to put out mar-

velous series on art and history, along with some very funny sitcoms. But its monopoly is gone, and in England as elsewhere, viewers and listeners can now choose from dozens of radio stations and television channels. The BBC's position seems more and more incongruous—and more and more beleaguered, with continual accusations of political bias.

This is highlighted by several recent events. A comparatively trivial one came in May, when the BBC decided it would not televise the July celebration of the Queen Mother's hundredth birthday, leaving it to be picked up by independent television. This provoked howls of not entirely factitious rage from right-wing newspapers, but the decision was telling enough. The BBC *does* have a broad political—or, more accurately, cultural—bias, which is almost inevitable in an organization run by educated children of the sixties and seventies. As I have patiently tried explaining to the readers of Tory tabloids, the BBC's apparatchiks are not revolutionary socialists who favor heavy redistributive taxation (not on the salaries they earn), but they are yuppies, bobos, and partisans in a quite unconscious way, people for whom the very idea of a royal birthday is vaguely risible and embarrassing.

Less trivial was the choice of a new director-general (as the corporation's chief executive is called) of the BBC. Greg Dyke spent years as an executive in commercial television, and seems to have made a tidy sum of money thereby: so much so that he could afford to give the equivalent of \$80,000 to Tony Blair's Labour Party over the course of five years. Last year, not long after Dyke's arrival, Andrew Marr was appointed the BBC's political editor. A former editor of *The Independent* and a columnist for *The Observer*, two liberal papers, he is a popular and admired journalist but unquestionably a sympathizer with the Labour government, not to say a man who takes the mysterious Blair project seriously.

Attempts to defend these appointments were very revealing, and exposed two fallacies. One center-left columnist wrote that a conservative journalist couldn't have been chosen, because most conservative journalists are polemicists, rather than people who “tease out the truth.” The fallacy here is that partisanship and partiality are found only on the outside edges of an imaginary spectrum of left and right, and that the nearer one is to the center, the nearer one is to virtue and truth. This is contrary to both logic and everyday observation: there's often no one so tendentious as an extreme moderate.

But much more ominous for the future of the BBC is the other fallacy: that such an organization could ever be completely neutral and pure at political heart. In fact, the BBC has been repeatedly attacked for political bias, notably on the question of European integration. Last December there was a ferocious spat on the *Today* program, the BBC's radio flagship, when the show was accused by one bitter critic of promoting Euro-federalism. He might have sounded a trifle hysterical, but he had a point: wrongly or rightly, those yuppie bobos who run the BBC *are* more sympathet-

ic than the average British voter to the European idea. And yet they take refuge in the *fable convenue* of absolute objectivity and utter detachment from politics on which the BBC was built and which today seems less plausible than ever. For all their obvious failings, most American television and radio companies at least don't encourage this illusion; only in occasional fulsome moments do CBS and NBC pretend to be quasi-divine institutions. As for the London press: when you buy the liberal broadsheet *Guardian* or the Tory tabloid *Daily Mail* (for both of which I manage to write), what you see is what you get. There is no pretense of that Olympian impartiality to which the BBC aspires, but which looks so comical in light of those appointments. In a newspaper column Marr has brushed this aside with genial facetiousness: "When I joined the BBC, my Organs of Opinion were formally removed. It was a solemn and intimidating ceremony, carried out in a back room at Television Centre, involving a conclave of senior executives, a pair of rusty secateurs and a brandy bottle. Damn painful, though the sutures are out now and at least it wasn't broadcast." But behind his little joke one might detect a certain unease about how much longer that pretense can be kept up.

The BBC has been suffering larger tribulations lately. The previous director-general was John Birt (then Sir John, now Lord Birt, as the first of his predecessors became Sir John and then Lord Reith). Years ago, with his then colleague Peter Jay, he announced television journalism's "Mission to Explain." During his tenure at the head of the BBC, from 1992 to 2000, he spent less time explaining and more time imposing a "market discipline" on the BBC's everyday internal operations; this meant subjecting even the most mundane procedures (using the photocopier) to micro-accounting. The internal market caused untold inconvenience. Anyone who has had experience of a large organization in the hands of zealously innovating bureaucrats will know the feeling. And the results were perverse, as always. Someone decided that, for accounting purposes, departments would be charged several pounds every time a staff member borrowed a book from the office library. "So we just pinched the books instead," one staff member recalls.

Needless to say, Greg Dyke has reversed various of his predecessor's policies. There is now what a corporate catchphrase calls "Building One BBC." Other changes have been more expensive. From Reith's time, BBC radio headquarters was at Broadcasting House. The World Service was based at Bush House, near the Strand. Television expanded from Broadcasting House to Alexandra Palace, in North London, and Lime Grove, in West London, and then to the nearby Television Centre. Birt moved radio news and current affairs to Television Centre, including *Today*, which runs on Radio 4 from 6:30 to 9:00 each morning. The staff had no choice, but the interviewees did; the pols and pundits who are interviewed on the program daily were prepared to go to Oxford Circus early in the morning but not to the outskirts of London, with

the result that more and more such interviews are done over the telephone. Now news is to move back into central London, although there is no plan to undo another change that caused much woe: the postponing of the main BBC-TV evening news from 9:00 P.M., when it had been almost as much of an institution as the old radio news at the same time sixty years ago, to 10:00 P.M., when it clashes with Independent Television News and Radio 4's main evening news.

None of these things is important in itself so much as symptomatic (as I say, this is familiar to anyone who has been in a large organization that is losing its way) of rudderless direction, an impression confirmed by a heavy turnover of personnel, with senior managers from both radio and television abruptly departing. By no means is every woe self-inflicted. For decades after the coming of commercial television the BBC rose to the challenge and was stimulated by the competition. But satellite television, particularly in the form of Rupert Murdoch's vast operation, presents an almost insuperable threat. Once upon a time the BBC showed every important sporting event. Then it lost them, one after another: cricket, rugby, racing. The most devastating blow was when Murdoch's Sky Channel bought the rights to air all games in the Premiership, as our soccer major league is now pretentiously called. The BBC has recently been fighting back, trying to secure the rights to some of the great sporting occasions once more.

Even this raises an awkward question: How much should a public-service corporation pay for what it shows? The question is raised in another way by, for example, *Have I Got News for You*, a smart, witty, and—to Americans, who sometimes take part—startlingly lewd panel program. Its three regular performers are each paid, I've been reliably told, as much for a few hours' work a week as many players in the BBC orchestras earn in a year. The fees wouldn't be anyone else's business except in a corporation with unique legal and moral responsibilities. Does the license fee exist to enrich comedy performers, or soccer clubs, on a vast scale?

As ever, the BBC plays an important part in British cultural life, above all musical life. It puts on the Proms (more formally, the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts) for eight weeks every summer at the Royal Albert Hall, in London, with each concert broadcast live on Radio 3, successor to the Third Programme. This is sometimes described as the greatest music festival on earth, and for once the boast is hard to deny. A season ticket for "promming," or standing in the arena, to hear more than seventy concerts costs the price of a single ticket at the Salzburg Festival. Last summer prommers heard the Berlin Philharmonic and San Francisco Symphony Orchestras, with such conductors as Michael Tilson Thomas and Bernard Haitink.

But the clamor for accessibility has infected every corner of the BBC, even Radio 3, which now broadcasts all day

and night like any other classical FM station. Radio 3 has trashy gossip programs about music, and it has *Making Tracks*, a perfectly detestable twenty-minute spot at 3:40 P.M. in which two gruesomely winsome presenters from children's television chatter to those of all ages with a mental age of nine. Even the World Service has suffered. Its standards are still very high at its best, but the tendency toward lightening the news is evident there, too, not least in the belief that listeners can't bear one newsreader's uninterrupted voice for several minutes at a stretch. From 1:00 to 5:35 A.M. Radio 4 switches over to the World Service, and as a hardened insomniac, I often listen to it. During the Olympic Games, *The World Today* on the World Service included a saucy item about the influx of prostitutes to Sydney which had every catchpenny cliché short of the hallowed *News of the World* reporter's line when a hooker propositioned him: "I made an excuse and left." Without making an excuse I switched off.

Like everyone else, the BBC has been under pressure to favor cultural diversity. And quite right, too, I was about to add piously—but then, the World Service practiced diversity long before it had been named. The foreign-language departments at Bush House have always been as diverse as one could wish, and also fascinating hotbeds of exiled dissidence, from anti-Nazi refugees on the German service

sixty years ago, to anti-Communist refugees later, to refugees from Iran who may have helped to undermine the Shah. The English-language service was also diverse, but it has undergone a subtle change of late. The one great advantage of the standard—or the Oxford, or, indeed, the BBC—accent is its comprehensibility to foreigners. Now you can regularly hear Indians speaking on the World Service in accents so thick that they would be understood only with difficulty by English-speaking Africans or West Indians. BBC English was not so much an imperial caste mark as a genuine lingua franca. No longer. This may be connected with the kind of guilty angst associated with the BBC. Only in January, Dyke made a bizarre attack, saying that it was "hideously white."

The BBC's final and possibly fatal problem is that there is just too much of it. From one national radio station it became two and then three; now there are five. Radio 2 is classic pop music, from Broadway ballads to early rock, and I must admit (as a culture snob who is also a Boomer) that I am a secret devotee of such series as one sublimely presented not long ago by Little Richard, and another given over to a deconstructionist topographical analysis of Chuck Berry's great coast-to-coast song "Promised Land." But Radio 1 is straight commercial pop, equivalent to a hundred American FM rock stations, and although it might seem strange to us refined English to hear a string-quartet recital introduced by a sponsor, it sounds almost as odd to hear all-day rock without ads.

For various reasons it is hard to believe that the BBC will survive in its present form for very much longer. An absolute ban on advertising makes no sense when so much of the output, on television and on radio, is indistinguishable from that of commercial rivals. The license fee is half fiction and half extortion: you have to pay it even if you never watch anything on your television but *Channel 4 Racing*, CNN, or obscene videos (I watch a good deal of the first two). And the almost fanatical defense of the BBC's purity is odd coming from journalists who, however politically correct they may be, would not want to write for newspapers or book publishers owned by the state.

The most likely end is a gradual breakup, with BBC-TV taking advertising and the popular radio stations, which bear little resemblance to Reith's ideal of public-service broadcasting, privatized, as so many of our state-owned enterprises have been. If British Airways and British Telecom, why not British Broadcasting? Having no fanatical objection to public subsidy of culture and education, I would be happy to see Radio 3 continue in something like its present guise, and also the World Service—for no other reason than that at its best it has been a great mass medium and a good deed in a naughty world. The slow demise of the BBC might be a reason to grieve that the shade of that which once was great has passed away; but then, as a simpler saying goes, all good things must come to an end. ▀

WORN TOOL

How odd to hold this implement
 of a lapsed time

 whose dated use clings still in the
 blunt blade and the

 gleaming grip—Celtic chimera,
 brave lion head

 softened by hands. Soon even you
 will be forgotten,

 my letter opener, bronze or brass!
 No one will know

 why such a dull stub of a blade
 found such a fanciful

 handle, as if the one who gripped it
 fought with ghosts.

—STEPHEN SANDY



MIMESIS by Guy Billout

BIG BEND

A short story

BY BILL ROORBACH

.....

That night Mr. Hunter (the crew all called him Mr. Hunter) lay quietly awake for two hours before the line of his thoughts finally made the twitching conversion to mirage and hallucination that heralded ease and melting sleep.

What had kept him awake was primarily a worry that he was being too much the imperious old businessman, the self he thought he'd conquered—even killed—in retirement, the part of himself that poor Betty had least admired (though this was the part that brought home the bacon). This area of worry he packaged with a resolution only to ask questions for at least one day of work—no statements or commands or observations or commentary, no matter what, to Stubby or anyone else; no matter what, questions only.

Stubby, who was now snortingly asleep in the next bunk of their nice but spare staff accommodations here at Big Bend National Park, was not hard to compartmentalize: Mr. Hunter would simply stop laughing or smiling at or even acknowledging Stubby's stupid jokes and jibes, would not rise to bait (politics primarily), would not pretend to believe Stubby's stories, especially those about his exploits with women. Scott was Stubby's actual name. He was fifty-three, an old hippie who had never cut his ponytail or jettisoned the idea that corporations were ruining the world, and who called the unlikely women of his tall tales "chicks" and "chiquitas." Strange bedfellows, Stubby and Mr. Hunter, who shared a two-bed room in the workers' quarters.

Another cause of sleeplessness was Martha Kolodny of Chicago, here in blazing, gorgeous, blooming, desolate Big Bend on an amateur ornithological quest. Stubby called her "Mothra," which had been funny at first, given Ms. Kolodny's size and thorough, squawking presence, but which was funny no longer, given the startling fact of Mr. Hunter's crush on her, which had arrived unannounced after his long conversation with her just this evening, in the middle of a huge laugh from Ms. Kolodny, a huge and happy, hilarious laugh from the heart of her very handsome heart. The Kolodny compartment in his businesslike brain he closed and latched with a simple instruction to himself: *Do not have crushes, Mr. Hunter.* He was too old for crushes

("sneakers" he'd called them in high school, class of 1944). And Ms. Kolodny was not the proper recipient of a crush in any case. She was under fifty and certainly over 150 pounds, Mr. Hunter's own lifelong adult weight, and married, completely married, two large rings on the proper finger, giant gemstones blazing.

Still other concerns, carefully placed by Mr. Hunter one by one in their nighttime lockers: the house in Atlanta (Arnie would take care of the yard and the gardens, and Miss Feather would clean the many rooms, as always, in his absence); the neglect of his retirement portfolio (Fairchild Ltd. had always needed prodding but had always gotten the job done, spectacularly in the past several years); the coming Texas summer, a summer he might rather miss.

Oh, but Betty, his wife, his girl, his one and only love, his lover, his helpmate, his best friend, mother of their three (thoroughly adult) children, dead of stroke three years. They had planned all they would do when he retired; and when he did retire, she died. So he was mourning not only the loss of her but also the loss of his long-held vision of the future, the thought that one distant day she would bury him. No compartment was large enough to compartmentalize Betty (as he always called her), but he achieved a kind of soft peace, like sleep, when he thought of her. He no longer experienced the sharp pains and gouged holes everywhere in him and the tears every night. *Count your blessings, Mr. Hunter,* he had thought wryly, and had melted a little at one broad edge of his consciousness, and had soon fallen asleep in the West Texas night.

The National Park Service hired senior citizens, as part of its policy of not discriminating based on age and so forth, for pleasant jobs at above minimum wage. And because they didn't accept volunteers for the real, honest work that Mr. Hunter had decided to escape into for a salutary year, he signed on for pay, though he certainly didn't need the money. And here in Texas, Mr. Hunter, rich as Croesus and older, found himself shoveling sand up into the back of the smallest dump truck he'd ever seen, half shovelfuls so as not to hurt his back, and no one minded how little he did. He was old in the eyes

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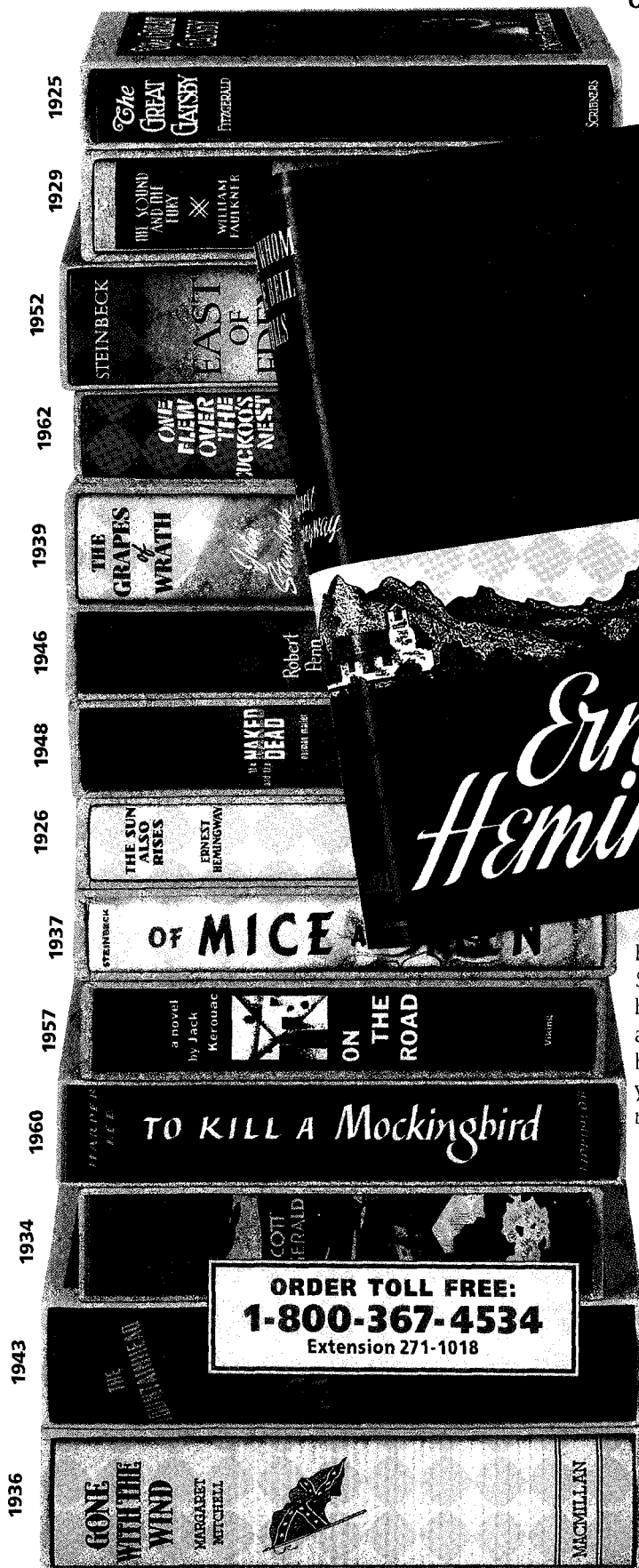
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of his fellows on the work crew—a seventysomething, as Stubby pointed out, working for \$6.13 an hour.

The crew was motley, all right: Mr. Hunter, who was assumed to be the widower he was, and assumed to be needy, which of course he was not (in fact, the more he compared himself with his new colleagues, the wealthier he knew himself to be). Dylan Briscoe, painfully polite, adrift after college, who had wanted to go to Yellowstone to follow his ranger girlfriend but had been assigned here the previous summer. He lost his girl, met a new girl, spent the winter in Texas with Juanita from Lajitas, a plainspoken Mexican-American woman of no beauty, hovered near Mr. Hunter on every job, and gave Mr. Hunter his crew name—Mr. Hunter—because Dylan was constitutionally unable to associate the name Dennis with such an old geezer. Freddy was a brainy, obnoxious jock taking a semester off from the University of Alabama. He was leery of Mr. Hunter, disdainful of Stubby, horrible on the subject of women (“gash,” he called them collectively), resentful of work, smelling of beer from the start of the day, yet well read and decently educated despite all. Luis Marichal, the crew boss, about whom much was assumed (jail, knife fights, mayhem) but little was actually known, was liked by all, despite his otherness, for saying “Quit complaining” in a scary voice to Freddy more than once. He always had a gentle smile for Mr. Hunter. Finally, Stubby, short and fat and truly good-humored. Nothing needed to be assumed about Stubby, because Stubby told all: he had recently beat a drug habit, was once a roadie for the Rolling Stones, had been married thrice, had a child from each marriage, had worked many tech jobs in the early days of computers, had fallen into drink after the last divorce or before it, and then into cocaine, and then into heroin, had ended up in the hospital for four months in profound depression, had recovered, had “blown out the toxins,” had found that work with his hands and back made him sane. And sane he was, he said. This work crew in Texas had made him so.

All of them earned \$6.13 an hour, excepting Dylan, hired on some student-intern program with a lower pay scale, too shy to ask for parity, and of course excepting Luis, who’d been crew here many years though he wasn’t thirty, and was foreman—Luis made probably nine bucks an hour, with four young kids to support. And in a way excepting Mr. Hunter, who in addition to his \$6.13 an hour from the Seniors-in-the-Parks Program was watching his retirement lump sum grow into a mountain in eight figures.

Mr. Hunter shoveled sand with the rest of them, a wash of sand from the last big rain which had made nearly a dune on the shoulder of the road for a hundred yards, a dune dangerous to bicyclists. The crew shoveled into the small dump truck, and Luis drove, if rolling the truck ahead a few feet at a time could be called driving. Mr. Hunter wore comfortable and expensive relaxed-fit jeans. He preferred shoveling to the jobs the other seniors got: cashier

at the postcard stand, official greeter, filing associate, inventory specialist, cushy nonsense along those lines.

Mr. Hunter shoveled as lightly as anybody and did not laugh at Stubby’s stories and thought of Martha Kolodny for no reason he could make sense of—her laugh from the center of her heart and soul, and her large frame that oughtn’t to be alluring to him at all but was indeed, and her braininess. Intelligence always was sexy to him. She was as smart as Bitty and as quick, though Bitty would have called her noisy.

Big Bend here in April after a wet winter was in thorough bloom: prickly pear, cholla, century plants, scores of others, colors picked from the sunset and the sandstone cliffs and the backs of birds. Mr. Hunter, thinking to get some conversation started, asked his first question of the day, knowing the answer in advance: “Dylan, what can you tell us about the subject of love?”

Dylan blushed and said, “Juanita,” with evident pride and huge love for his woman. And everyone at once said, “Juanita from Lajitas,” which was fun to say and which had become a chant and which they knew Dylan liked to hear. Not even Freddy would say anything that might harm Dylan-boy’s spirit.

“You are like me,” Luis said. “A steady heart and a solid love.”

And Stubby, damn him, said, “Mr. Hunter, what about you?”

“Have you noticed that I’m only asking questions today?” Mr. Hunter replied.

“But I saw you stalking Mothra,” Stubby said. “Mothra, Queen of the Bird-watchers’ Bus. She’s a cute one, she is. Tall drink of water, she is. I’ll bet she was one athlete in her day! Iron Woman! Anchor in the freestyle relay! Bench press two hundred pounds, easy. What do you say, Mr. Hunter? You were gabbing with her nearly three hours yesterday in the parking lot there. You were! No, no, sir, you were! You’re a better man than I! More power to you! She won’t give me the time of day; with you she’s laughing and shouting and joking! And she was scratching her nose the whole time, which Keith Richards once told me is the sure sign you’re going to get a little wiggle in.”

All work (such as it was) ceased. Mr. Hunter made a game smile and smiled some more and enjoyed the breeze and the attention. He asked a question: “Do you know that Plato’s *Republic* begins with a discussion of just this subject—of love and sex? And do you know that one of the fellows sitting around Socrates says something like ‘I saw Sophocles’—the old poet, he calls him—‘I saw the old poet down in town the other day, three score and ten, and I asked him: At your age, Sophocles, what of love? And do you know what Sophocles told that man? Sophocles told that man, ‘I feel I have been released by a mad and furious beast!’”

The crew stood with eyebrows raised a long time, ab-

sorbing this tale from the mysterious void of time that was Mr. Hunter's life.

After a long silence Stubby said, "Oh, fuck you."

Mr. Hunter knew what Stubby meant: the implied analogy was faulty. And Stubby was right. Martha Kolodny was certainly on Mr. Hunter's mind, Martha Kolodny of all women, and the mad and furious beast had hold of Mr. Hunter certainly. It wasn't as if he'd had no erections in the past three affectionless years—but the one he'd had this morning caught his attention surely. And it wasn't all about erections, either. It was that laugh from the heart and the bright conversation and something more: Martha Kolodny could *see* Mr. Hunter, and he hadn't been seen clearly in three years. Nor had his particular brand of jokes been laughed at, or his ideas praised, nor had someone noticed his hair (still full and shiny, and bone-in-the-desert white) or looked at his hands so, or gazed into his eyes.

At the Thursday-evening ranger's program a very bright young scientist lectured about Mexican fruit bats with passion, somewhat mollifying Dennis Hunter's disappointment. Oh, in the growing night the assembled travelers and rangers and tourists and campers and workers (including Stubby) did see bats, as promised. And among the assembled listeners were a number of birders from Martha Kolodny's bus. But Martha was not among them.

Dennis Hunter lurked on a back bench in clean clothes—Hong Kong-tailored white shirt, khaki pants, Birkenstocks (ah, retirement), eight-needle silken socks—trying to remember how long Martha had said her birding group would be here. Until April 17 was the date he remembered, almost his second daughter's birthday; his second daughter was, yes, about Martha's age. Five more days, only five.

Then he felt a sweeping presence and heard a suppressed laugh from deep inside the heart of someone's capacious heart, and Martha stood just beside him. "May I sit?" she asked. This was a whisper, but still louder in Dennis's ear than the ranger's lecture. She sat on his bench and slid to his side like an old friend; got herself settled, deep and quiet, her perfume expansile; put her chin in the air and raised her eyebrows, seeming to try to find her place in the stream of words as the passionate ranger introduced a film.

The heavy narration covered the same ground the lecture had, with less fervor and erudition, but the pictures of bats were pleasing to watch: the film employed all sorts of camera and lighting tricks and slow-motion tricks and freeze-frames and animation. Bats streaming out of Carlsbad Caverns, not eight hours from here. "Always wanted to see that," Martha said, leaning into Dennis. "Always, always."

"I thought for you it was birds," Dennis said.

Martha put a hand to her nose and scratched. "Whatever has wings," she said. Her other hand was on the bench close between them, and she leaned on it so that her head

was not a breath away from Dennis's. He smelled her shampoo—coconut and vanilla. Her henna-red hair, braided in a thick lariat, her distinct chin, the strong slope of her nose, her deep tan, her wrinkles from laughing from the heart of her, her wide shoulders and loose white shirt—all of it, all of her, was in his peripheral vision as he watched the film, which was more truly peripheral though he stared at it, her many scents in his nostrils.

The night before, they had taken care of the small talk and more: Martha Kolodny was an arts administrator, which title Dennis pretended not to understand, though he knew well enough what it meant. She was the kind of person he had disdained in his years as a marketing wizard at Pfizer (years he had then told her about). Talking to Martha, he'd felt the truth of something Bitty had once said: he had really grown up after sixty-five. Martha had patiently explained that she ran a grants-writing office that helped to provide funding (not such huge figures as Martha seemed to think) for several arts organizations, the Lyric Opera of Chicago among them. She herself had once danced—modern dance—with high hopes. She was too *big*, she had said daintily. "My teachers always said I was too *big*." And she had laughed that laugh that came from the heart of her heart and smote Dennis.

Her husband was a medical scientist at Northwestern, both a Ph.D. and an M.D. His first name was Wences. He was first-generation Polish. He was working on neuro-receptors, about which Dennis knew a thing or two from his years with the drug company. The couple had no kids; they had married late and had decided that at her age kids were not a good idea. Now she was forty-seven. Wences and she barely saw each other. For them the passion had fled. "I'm caught," she had said. "I'm caught in an *economic arrangement*." Her eyes had been significant, Dennis thought.

The film ended abruptly. The ranger-scientist took the podium in the dark that followed. A spotlight hit his face. Martha sat up and looked at Mr. Hunter fondly; that was the only word for how she looked at him—like an old friend. She whispered, "One Batman joke from this boy and we're out of here!"

In a television voice the ranger said, "That's the Bat Signal, Robin."

"That's it," Martha said, feigning great shock. She rose and took Dennis's hand and pulled him ungently to his feet, and the two of them left the natural amphitheater and were soon striding along a rough path that led into the Chisos Mountains night.

"I knew you'd be at the talk!" Martha said.

"I'm not there now," Dennis said.

She said, "I can't get you out of my head!" She was breathless from the walk. They pulled up at the farthest end of a loop path that looked out over the great basin of the Rio Grande under brilliant, coruscating stars.

"I shoveled sand all day with the boys. Thinking of you."

"I love when you grin just like that," Martha said hotly.

But you are married, Dennis thought to say. He held the words back forcibly. What if she didn't mean anything romantic at all? What an awful gaffe that would be!

They looked out into the blackness of the valley and up into the depths of space and were quiet a long ten minutes. "Mexico over there," Dennis said.

"You know you can rent a canoe and paddle across the Rio Grande to Mexico for lunch? No customs inspection necessary."

He said, "Someone did say that. And at the hot springs, apparently, you can swim across pretty easily. But no lunch."

"Unless you brought your own," Martha said.

"And the hot springs are very nice, too, I hear. Nice to soak in, even in the heat, I hear." He'd heard all this from Freddy in the grossest terms. Freddy had said it was the place he'd bring a *bitch*, if there were anything but *stanking* javelinas around here.

"I would like to kiss you," Dennis said. He'd forgotten entirely how this sort of thing was done, knowing only that now (this he'd read), here in the twenty-first century, one got permission for everything, each step, before proceeding.

"I told my husband I wouldn't mess around with anyone while I was in Texas," Martha said. Then, less lightly, "That's the shambles our marriage is in."

"Well, Martha, darling, a kiss is certainly not necessary to a good friendship," Dennis said, glad he'd asked and not just invited rebuff and embarrassment, though he was embarrassed enough.

But Martha kissed him, full on the lips, and he was glad for the Listerine he had swilled and glad that life hadn't ended and glad to remember all the electrical connections and brightened cells and glowing nerves he was remembering from the bottom of his feet to the tip of his tongue as he kissed her and was kissed.

They talked and necked—no better expression for it—for an hour under the stars.

"Well," Dennis said, "I'm afraid, despite best intentions, you have kissed in Texas." He felt bad for Wences Kolodny.

"But I have not messed around," Martha said.

"On technicalities are the great cases won."

She said, "Do you want to take a little swim to Mexico tomorrow?"

"I'll unpack my swimming trunks."

"I said nothing to Wences about messing around in Mexico."

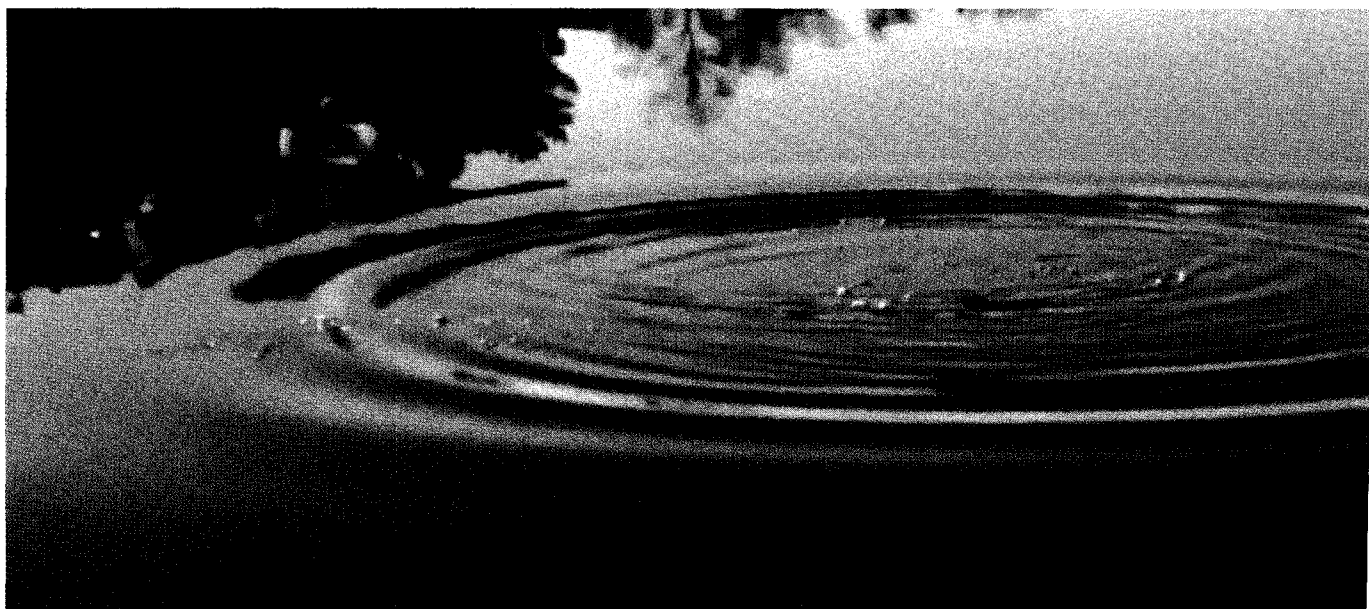
"That isn't funny to me," Dennis said.

But they kissed till near eleven, when the Chicago birders' bus loaded quickly and headed to the birders' hotel, on the outskirts of the enormous national park.

Dennis walked back to his room with feelings he hadn't had in fifty years, pain both physical and metaphysical, elation sublime. Ambivalence scratched and snarled like an enraged animal under his squeaky cot.

Mr. Hunter no longer had the physical strength of his estimable colleagues on the work detail, but they had not his old man's stamina. With his steady work all day he outperformed the college boys, though Stubby could do in a single hour more than the whole crew did in all of a typical day when he got inspired, which he did just before lunch on this day, Friday. Stubby worked like a dog and a demon and an ox, worked as if possessed—every cliché applied. He said, "We don't want Luis in trouble if this sand ain't up and off the road, boys!" They'd got about a quarter of it up the previous day, and already, by noon this day, two quarters more.

The crew stopped for lunch and ate in tired silence. Then, as they settled down into what should normally have been something like a siesta, Stubby turned to Mr. Hunter.



He said, "Where did you and the bird lady go last night when you left the lecture so early?"

"Why do you ask?" Mr. Hunter said wryly, as the attention of the crew fell pleasingly upon him.

"I was only worried, is all," Stubby said, even more wryly.

After a long silence Luis grinned and said, "Tell us, Sophocles, old poet, what of love?"

"Love!" Stubby said. "You should have smelled our room in the night! What perfume! And perfume, my brothers, does not rub off without some rubbing!"

Still wryly—he could think of no other safe tack to take—Mr. Hunter said, "Do you imply that an old man should not seek romance?"

"Not s'long as it's with an old lady," Freddy said.

"She's not as old as all that," Stubby said. "She's not yet my age, and I'm a youth, as you can see."

"Is she over forty?" Dylan asked helpfully. Embarrassed, he bit into his burrito and looked out over the dry valley of the Rio Grande.

"Ah, forty!" Stubby said. "Forty is the youth of old age and the old age of youth!"

Freddy said equably, "How old are y'all, anyway, Mr. Hunter?" He leaned a long way, gave a short smile, reached and took one of Luis's tortillas.

"Three score and fourteen," Mr. Hunter replied. "Seventy-four. The youth of death, I would say, if pressed."

"What of love, Sophocles?" Luis said again.

Mr. Hunter could not help himself. He beamed. He said, "Do any of you really believe my private hours are any of your business?"

Stubby said, "Do we not have the right to learn from those older than us? And do you, Mr. Hunter, not have the duty to teach us?"

"Tay-ake her to Viagra Falls," Freddy said.

"Mr. Hunter has twice the cactus you have, hombre," Luis said.

"It's not all about sex," Dylan said.

"Hey, I don't know," Stubby said. "This woman, this bird-watcher, Mothra, obviously she's looking for something her marriage isn't giving her. She's taking power here. She's taking care of her needs. She's unfulfilled."

Dylan said, "But she made a promise."

"What is the nature of the promise we make in marriage?" Mr. Hunter said. He tried to sound wry, playing Socrates, but this was too close to the heart of his worry.

Dylan said, "That we should love, honor, and obey."

"The flesh is weak," Luis said opprobriously.

"The flesh has a job to do," Stubby said.

"I say go for it," Freddy said.

A long silence followed in the windless day, punctuated erratically by the squawks of Mexican jays.

"I don't see how," Mr. Hunter said.

Freddy said, "Well, the boy kisses the girl ..."

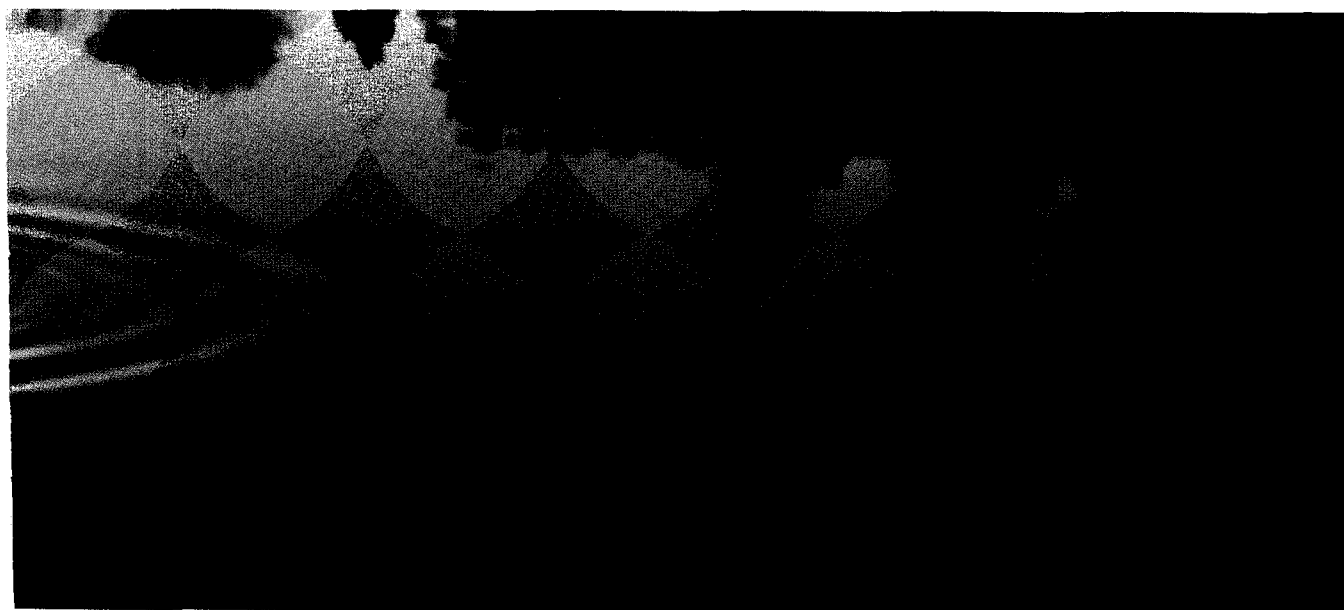
And the crew laughed, except for Luis. He said, "And what of your wife in heaven? What will happen when you see her there?"

Only Mr. Hunter had seen Luis as religious before now. The air grew more serious. Everyone stared off, each in his own thoughts.

Then Stubby said, "Actually, there's probably more here than the moral question. You've really fallen for this chick, you know? How are you going to feel if it goes further and then—boom—she's back to her husband? Leaves you alone! That's going to be a blow!"

"When Tina broke up with me ..." Freddy said. The others waited, but that was all he managed. Freddy looked off into the sky, and for the first time they could see his heart in his face and think of him as tender.

"There might be that kind of price," Stubby said.



JIM BRANDENBURG/MINDEN PICTURES

"This is good advice," Mr. Hunter said. "I don't know if I could tolerate the aftermath of a one-night stand."

Stubby slid off his rock, leaned back against it, and closed his eyes. Dylan lay down, chewing a twig. Luis stood, stretched, patted Mr. Hunter's shoulder, and walked up the road to be alone. Luis prayed after lunch, Mr. Hunter knew. He might have thought Freddy was softly weeping if he didn't know what a tough customer Freddy was.

Mr. Hunter had made up his mind: no married woman for him.

Stubby had joked that Martha was an athlete, and so she was: forty-seven years old, Dennis Hunter's height and weight, she walked with the physical confidence of an athlete, looking in her shorts and stretch top as if she might jump up and fly at any moment. But in Dennis's little rental car her folded legs seemed delicate and soft. Her skin was beautiful to him, and her smell, and her voice.

"I couldn't sleep all last night," she said.

"I could barely work today," he said.

HIGHWAY 12, JUST EAST OF PARADISE, IDAHO

The doe, at a dead run, was dead
the instant the truck hit her.
In the headlights I saw her tongue
extend and her eyes go shocked and vacant.
Launched at a sudden right angle—say
from twenty miles per hour south to fifty
miles per hour east—she skated
many yards on the slightest toe-edge tips
of her dainty deer hooves, then fell
slowly, inside the speed of her new trajectory,
not pole-axed but stunned, away
from me and the truck's decelerating pitch.
She skidded along the right lane's
fog line true as a cue ball,
until her neck caught a signpost
that spun her across both lanes and out of sight
beyond the edge. For which, I admit, I was grateful,
the road there being dark, narrow, and shoulderless,
and home, with its lights, not far away.

—ROBERT WRIGLEY

The rest of the talk on the hour's drive to the Hot Springs canyon was about the landscape of the park, and they didn't need to say much for looking at that landscape, the great buttes and cliffs and mesas miles away and unmoving. Martha read from her guidebook: "The park is eight hundred and one thousand one hundred sixty-three acres."

Dennis Hunter hadn't known that.

She read, "The Rio Grande was known to the Spanish conquistadors as the Great River of the North, and to the early pioneers as the River of Ghosts."

"I'm told this was Comanche territory," Dennis said. Luis had told him so.

Martha nodded her head, shook it, and then nodded it. "Comanche territory," she repeated, saying it from the heart of her heart, where her laughter came from.

Oh, God. Dennis felt his heart flowing out to her entirely, yet not leaving his rib cage at all. They drove slowly through the great basin of the River of Ghosts, past the Chisos Mountains. A pickup truck with New Mexico plates zoomed up from behind, passed easily, zoomed out of sight. Dennis thought about how easily he could declare his love and ask dear Martha her intentions. Perhaps Wences was out. Perhaps a split was imminent. How ask? He said, "'Chisos' means something like 'ghostly' in the Apache language." Luis had told him that, too.

They were just quietly driving along, looking at the landscape. "Yes, it is," Martha said. "Ghostly, all right." She put her hands up in a gesture of amazement. She had taken off her rings. "Living things don't belong here. Not people, certainly."

Dennis felt himself and the car almost lifting off the pavement. Not that he was faint—not at all. If anything, he felt more present, floating car and all, with warm blood in his air-conditioned face and something humming in him, thighs to lungs. She'd taken off her rings. Dennis had never taken his ring off, not once for any reason, not since the night it went on his finger, June 11, 1947.

In the small canyon where the hot springs lay, they walked in the bright sun along seabed cliffs, striated layers of the ages thrown up by earth forces at odd angles. Martha immediately heard a great horned owl, and got it calling to her by hooting saucily. Dennis floated; he floated along the dry path and felt that Martha floated too.

Together they inspected the abandoned ruins of the old hotel and store there, the hotel and store about which Martha had read aloud from her guidebook. Together they found the petroglyphs she had read about, and walked along a Comanche path that had become a commercial enterprise's trail to the hot springs and was now a park path for tourists. Martha took Dennis's hand. He wanted to declare his love. How old-fashioned he knew he was! She would laugh at him, he thought, and this laugh would come from her teeth and not her heart.

The path descended between thick reeds and willows and the canyon wall. Soon Martha stopped and put a finger in the air. "Hear the river?"

Yes, Dennis heard it, a rushing sound ahead. Martha's hand was in his, their dry hands casually clasped, pressure of fingers in a small rhythm, a pulse of recognition: something profound between them.

Dennis couldn't find the words as the Rio Grande came into view: "Doesn't it ... isn't it ... doesn't this just ... *tickle* you?" That was pathetic. He thought and tried again: "This little sprite of a muddy river, this ancient flow, this reed-bound oasis? That this is the famous border?"

"Dennis, I don't know what to do."

"That that is Mexico over there?"

"May I see you in Atlanta?"

They stopped on the plain and dusty rock—flat, polished sandstone, solidified mud. They stopped and held hands and looked at the river and could not look at each other.

She said, "What is this between us?"

Dennis could think of words for what was between them. It was passion, nothing less, on the one hand, and her husband, nothing less, on the other, both between them and no way to say a word at this moment about either. He let a long squeeze of her hand say what it could, and then he pulled her along. Brightly he said, "I expected gun turrets and chain-link fence and border stations."

"Well, there's nothing but desert for hundreds of miles. They just don't watch much here."

Pleasingly, no other soul occupied the hot springs, a steady gush of very hot water rising up out of a deteriorated square culvert built a century past. The buildings were gone—swept away by floods, they must have been. But one foundation remained, and formed a sort of enormous bathtub the size of a patio. In the hot air of the day the water didn't steam at all. Soft moss grew in the tub.

Martha sat on a rock and took her shoes off. Dennis liked her feet. He wondered if Wences liked her feet. He liked her knees very much. He liked that she was so strong and big, so unlike Bitty, who was a bone. He liked the fatty dimpling of Martha's thighs in her black shorts. She dipped her feet in. "Wow, hot," she said.

"Maybe too hot for today?" Dennis said.

"No, no, it's wonderful! And then the river will feel cold. A blessing." Then she said, "Well, no one's around." And she pulled off her shirt, just like that, and clicked something between her breasts to make her bra come loose, and shed it, and stepped out of her shorts and then her lacy panties (worn for him, he was startled to realize) and slipped into the hot water in a fluid motion, Dennis more or less looking away, looking more or less upward at the cliff (cliff swallows up there).

"I'm not sitting here alone," Martha said.

So Dennis tried a fluid kind of stripping like hers, but ended up hopping on one foot, trying to get his pants past

his ankles. He stripped, and hopped, and slid into the hot water, self-conscious about his old body, the way his skin had become loose, the spots of him.

"It's love between us," he said, which was not the same as declaring love. "And that you are married."

"No touching in Texas," Martha said, far too lightly.

The water was shallow. She sat bare-breasted, up to her waist in the hot water, not exactly young herself. The water was gentle and very hot and melted them both, turned them red like lobsters.

"Swim," Martha said. She climbed out of the pool, down old steps into the river, and dropped herself into the current. Stroke, stroke, out of the current and she was standing on the bottom again, waist-deep. She was forty-seven, and married, and standing waist-deep and naked in the Rio Grande River, not twenty feet from Mexico. Dennis felt her gaze, considered Wences, heard Luis's stern voice, heard Freddy's (*go for it*), heard Bitty's funny laugh, thought of his three children, heard his daughter Candy (*Daddy, I know Mother would want you to date*), and followed Martha into the river, enjoying the relative cold of it after the scalding spring. Stroke, stroke, stroke, he was being swept away in the current; he pictured himself washed up on a flat rock dead and naked miles downstream. But Martha got hold of his hand, laughing, and they stood waist-deep together in the stream rushing past, silty, sweetly warm water.

"I'll get our stuff," Martha said.

She swam back and bundled everything—large towels, clothes, binoculars, bottle of wine—and easily swam with one arm in the air till she was back by Dennis's side, holding the bundle all in front of her chest, dry. And if not absolutely dry, what difference? It would dry in seconds in the sun and parched air.

Suddenly she said, "The American Association of Arts Administrators conference is in Atlanta this year." They stood in the flow of the river. "I could stay a week with you," she said. "Maybe more. It's June. Only two months from now."

"After that?" Dennis said.

Solemnly she said, "We shall see what we shall see." Then she laughed from the heart of the heart of her, and Dennis laughed and stumbled, and they made their way through the water to Mexico.

"I hope no one shoots us going back," Dennis said.

They made the rocky shore in Mexico and walked, not far, walked in Mexico until they were out of sight of the hot springs across the river, and right there under the late sun she spread the blanket and right there hugged him naked and the two older Americans in Mexico kissed and Dennis Hunter was a young man again—no, really—a boy in love, a tanned and buff shoveler of sand, a repairer of trails, a knower of animals, a listener to birds, anything but a widower alone in Atlanta the rest of his miserable days, miserable days alone. ■

PURSUIITS & RETREATS

TRAVEL

AN ALTERNATIVE BELGIUM

*Brussels and Bruges may be more obvious destinations,
but Ghent and Antwerp are more fun*

BY CORBY KUMMER

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On most travelers' mental maps Belgium is a place to find the world's best chocolates and classic French food as it hardly exists in France anymore, served at Michelin-starred restaurants full of Brussels-based Eurocrats. Or travelers think of Bruges, a storybook city of perfectly preserved medieval brick buildings with triangular stepped roofs overlooking narrow canals, like a Flemish Venice. To many Americans, Belgium itself has a fuzzy identity, with its confusing division into French-speaking Wallonia and Dutch-speaking Flanders. The country is easy to regard as an extension of its neighbors—Bruges a stop on the way to Amsterdam, and Brussels a cut-rate Paris, the landing point for bargain transatlantic flights, where one might pass a few hours admiring the world-class Art Nouveau architecture and eating a good meal before catching a southbound train.

Beer first took me to Belgium. Any member of the American craft-beer movement that took hold in the 1980s knows that Belgium's great beers have the nuance of wine and the power of whiskey. Buildings took me back—and the excitement of having discovered Ghent and Antwerp, cities that bring the country into sharper focus than their better-known fellows.

Ghent, like Bruges or Venice itself, has an otherworldly enchantment: I constantly crossed bridges to get one more stunning view of the fairy-tale buildings on the city's canals. It also has a real life as a port city (Belgium's largest after Antwerp) with an important university and

relatively few tourists—all attributes that Bruges lacks. Antwerp, like Brussels, is worldly and clearly significant: it is Europe's second largest port and Belgium's second largest city. But it is far livelier than the capital, and is just now building on the reputation of the "Antwerp six," fashion designers who are attracting worldwide attention. The streets are vibrant with a new cosmopolitanism and also with a jumble of architectural styles that range from quaint Flemish medieval to minimalist modern, by way of a gloriously peculiar Art Nouveau.

Great art, good food, city centers densely packed with neighborhoods that invite street-by-street inspection, shops full of desirable things you can afford (the dollar seems especially strong in Belgium), clean public transport that gets you from the capital (or its airport) to either city in less than an hour and around each city easily, boutique hotels in nicely restored buildings of architectural interest, bars and cafés where it's easy to start conversations with the universally English-speaking natives: I've come to think of Ghent and Antwerp as a kind of crash course in Europe, suitable for all ages. This is an excellent time to enroll.

Ghent is candle-crazy. On two visits I made last year, it seemed as if every restaurant, bar, and shop was lit by dozens of candles. Their warm light fills the permanently festive Tap & Tepel, a wine bar and modest restaurant in a Baroque palace off one of the central canals. The first evening I went, to meet a group of friends, I thought I had wan-

dered into a party until I spotted my group at a long communal table by the mullioned front windows.

The room holds floor-to-ceiling wooden shelves taken from a nineteenth-century shop and filled with books, wine bottles, old games, and curios, including Communist memorabilia and portraits of Lenin. It all reflects the sensibility of the shambling, white-haired and -bearded owner, Hendrik Keuleers, who that evening made the rounds a few steps behind a band of strolling violinists (some of them young Eastern European immigrants). Keuleers spent his youth as an active Communist and is now, he told me recently, "disillusioned"—passively misanthropic and actively zoophilic, as demonstrated by the ZOOFILIA painted in gold on a window and by the dogs underfoot. His leftist ideals seem to match those of most of his customers: probably because of the university, bohemia is thriving in Ghent, even though the city, along with Antwerp, gave victories to far-right parties in recent elections.

Certainly Keuleers has created one of the most seductive restaurants I know. Its strong suits are the list of French wines and the selection of farmhouse cheeses, including many of the French greats. Just a few hot soups and entrées are offered, all vegetarian, and everything is served with fantastically good bread that Keuleers buys from a nearby farm and waiters cut on a hand-cranked slicer. One morning I happened to walk by the Tap & Tepel on my way to the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, whose extensive collection is handsomely installed in an opulent, airy Rococo palace. I found Keuleers outside, unloading scrap wood, which he gathers from local construction sites for the restaurant's two big fireplaces. Behind the windows three of his five dogs sat atop the long table, symmetrical between the candelabra, happily barking at us.



The legendary founder of Antwerp, Silvius Brabo, presides over the Grote Markt

Most of the streets and canal fronts and bridges in Ghent's compact center are pedestrian-only, which adds to the Venetian echoes. Ten minutes from the center by foot are two remarkable buildings constructed for the socialist workers' movement, which remains strong here: the 1912 Art Nouveau Vooruit, with two theaters accommodating a resident dance company and visiting orchestras and drama groups; and the 1934 Bauhaus headquarters of the socialist newspaper *Dagblad Vooruit* (*Daily Forward*), now a student arts center with a lively café on the ground floor. At night the eight-story glass-block façade is fully illuminated, as if in some *Flash Gordon* metropolis. A block away is another, purer Bauhaus vision: the 1933 university library, in streamlined Rationalist style (aptly called Fascist in Italy), designed by Henry van de Velde.

Art lovers will of course stop first at the history-changing early-fifteenth-century cathedral altarpiece by the Van

Eyck brothers, who in one work defined the northern Renaissance and perfected the technique of oil painting. Ghent has numerous museums that are worthwhile not only for what they house but also for the inventive use they make of historic buildings. A folk-art museum, for instance, occupies a fourteenth-century almshouse and a row of eighteenth-century storefronts; the Museum of Industrial Archaeology and Textiles occupies a light-filled nineteenth-century cotton mill with panoramic views. (Cotton restored the city's fortunes, which had been built on textiles in medieval times; in the 1600s the city went into a long decline after the Spanish conquest drove away Protestant textile merchants.)

In one corner of the industry museum are the nineteenth-century shop front and furnishings of Tierenteyn, a store that still produces Ghent's must-take-home souvenir—wonderfully potent yet subtle mustard made from white-wine vinegar and aged in oak barrels. Tierenteyn has

a downtown shop, which looks much like the one in the museum; its clerks fill glass jars to order by dipping a wooden ladle into a big barrel.

Two hotels put you in the city center and into architectural history as well: the Cravensteen, with pleasant standard rooms in a restored nineteenth-century mansion and in several adjacent buildings around a courtyard; and the very small and personal La Maison de Claudine, with just two large suites and one room in a seventeenth-century building that was once a cloister. Claudine Bovyn, La Maison's owner, is a singer, as the sheet music on the piano in the breakfast room attests, and frequently guests are visiting artists working on operas or plays. The extremely reasonable prices help to explain the months-long waiting list for weekends.

The Tap & Tepel is just one of several restaurants that reflect both the history and the bohemian side of Ghent. Max, a posh tearoom decorated with Art

Nouveau woodwork and glass from the kiosks the company long put up at Belgian fairs, serves the only waffles I've ever liked in Belgium—yeasty, slightly sour, and very light, unlike the usual Liège-style buttery ingots. At De Geschoeide Karmelied, a serene restaurant around a bamboo garden (planted by the previous owners, who had a Japanese restaurant), an ambitious twenty-five-year-old chef named Eli De Heem offers local “grandmother’s” specialties, many of them beer-based stews.

Kitsch seems to be a deliberate decorative theme in Belgium—just one expression of the subversive humor that is a national trait. This is particularly overt at Pink Flamingo, a bar with a multi-tiered chandelier made entirely of Barbie dolls and walls covered with 1960s record-album sleeves and movie posters; unbelievably, it isn't a gay bar. The Koningshuis is perhaps as popular for its campy décor on the theme of the crowned heads of Europe, especially those of Belgium, as for its nice food (I had clear wild-mushroom soup full of sweet, thumb-nail-sized cold-water shrimp).

The Dulle Griet tavern, on one of the city's largest squares, has all the beer-related paraphernalia any fanatic could want. More important, it serves all five of the authentic, dark and powerful Trappist beers (as opposed to the dozens of “abbey-style” imitators) that are still made in Belgium. Try Westmalle, from a beautiful working abbey ten miles away, on tap—a rare treat even in Belgium. In the back of the low-lit tavern is a brightly lit atrium with a second-floor tableau of an eighteenth-century dandy looking out a window while an elegantly dressed woman slumps in exhaustion over a sewing machine behind him. What does it mean? Ghenters seem to expect a bit of surrealism in their daily life, along with superb beer.

First impressions of Antwerp can be disappointing, especially if a tour bus drops you at the huge Gothic cathedral, whose beautifully restored and always illuminated white spire dominates the city: the streets around it are touristy and seedy, like much of downtown Brussels. But walk just a few minutes and you will encounter the Left Bank chic

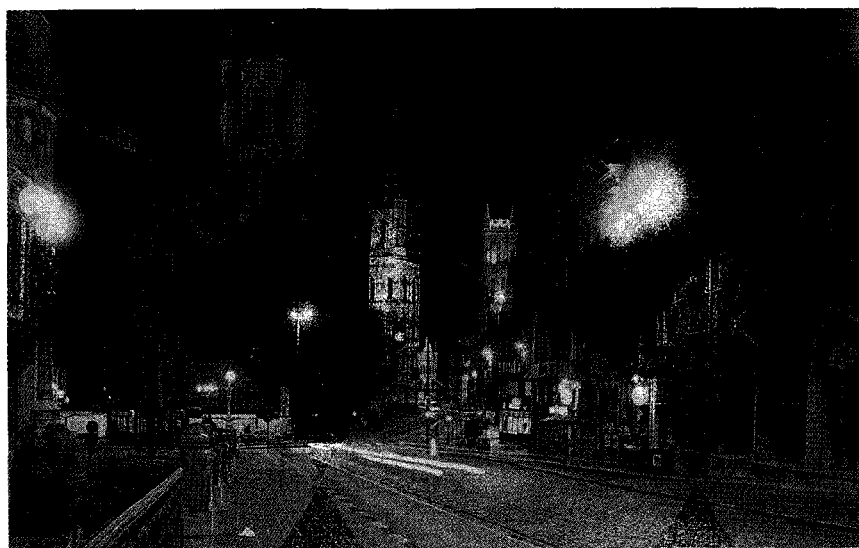
of the Wilde Zee (Wild Sea) neighborhood, home to the grand house where Rubens lived and worked and to designer shops featuring the Antwerp six; a large Beaux Arts flatiron building in the neighborhood will soon house a museum of fashion. Or you'll find the tranquil Baroque splendor of the small Hendrik Conscienceplein, one of the loveliest squares I know, in an area filled with art galleries, antiques shops, and imposing Baroque and Rococo mansions; nearby is the lively Stadswaag square, where teenage visitors can hang out with students from many countries. Or you'll come upon the foursquare Renaissance warehouses of the old port district, with their striped-brick façades and corbeled roofs. The working port that accounts for the city's prosperity has been moved a few miles north; the panoramic riverfront and charming open warehouses that line the old port, with their Art Nouveau perforated cast-iron roofs, have been preserved and are the centerpiece of an ambitious residential-and-commercial development scheme.

If you arrive by train, you'll alight in the breathtaking Central Station, a monumental combination of Renaissance Revival and Art Nouveau with a café that looks like a hall out of Versailles. The streets around the station have the brassy feel of a big city; they hide the 1,500 workshops of the diamond-cutting industry, which is largely invisible save for a new museum and a central showroom with tours and, not incidentally, dia-

monds for sale. The industrial-age magnificence of the station and the flamboyant Art Nouveau variations on past styles in the buildings that line the main shopping street, which runs from the station to the cathedral, are but preparation for an architectural riot that few visitors learn of: the outlying Zurenborg neighborhood, which all by itself merits a trip to the city.

I devote less space here to Antwerp than to Ghent, because the city has produced an exemplary forty-page color brochure with walking itineraries which introduces every neighborhood and answers all the questions I had while exploring: Do people still live in the tiny stucco houses in an alley near the Museum of Fine Arts, and do they use the outdoor tap? (Yes and yes; and the city looks after the elderly residents, who have lived there all their lives.) Why is there a ship's prow sticking out of that amazing Art Nouveau house behind the museum? (The house was commissioned by a shipbuilder.) Following the suggestions of this booklet (“Twelve Adventures in Antwerp,” available for less than \$3.00 at the tourist office at Grote Markt) can easily fill three days.

I failed to get a sense of Antwerp cuisine from the two restaurants that were recommended to me. Both Kleine Zavel, in a former seamen's society and boardinghouse in the old port, and Kleine Bourla, in the chic shopping district, revealed more about the sartorial and conversational behavior of the city's cut-



Three Gothic spires dominate views everywhere in Ghent

While exploring, it's hard not to think of where you'd most like to live in Antwerp, which is reminiscent of Boston or San Francisco in its sense of a forward-looking intellectual and commercial life going on inside neat old houses. It would be tempting to move into one of the gorgeously decorated rooms in De Witte Lelie (The White Lily), Antwerp's grandest hotel, in sumptuous sixteenth-century houses near Hendrik Conscienceplein. I stayed first at 'T Sandt, a boutique hotel with smallish but prettily decorated rooms in a former soap factory on the riverfront, and later at the Firean, a splendidly restored 1929 small hotel with Art Deco glass and wrought-iron fittings. The rooms are reasonably priced, but the hotel is in a remote area.

For more information about visiting Ghent and Antwerp, including contact information for most of the hotels mentioned above, call the Belgium Tourist Office in New York at 212-758-8130 or visit the tourist office's Web site, at www.visitbelgium.com. For information about La Maison de Claudine, in Ghent, e-mail the hotel at maison.claudine@newumail.net.

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COMPUTERS

AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY MEGABYTES

Flight simulation—using a computer to pretend to fly a plane—has become both a surprisingly realistic experience and a surprisingly popular hobby

BY JAMES FALLOWS

.....

When Microsoft put the original Flight Simulator program onto the market, in the early 1980s, I tried it for a while and then gave up. I had thought it would be fun to “take off” from Meigs Field, the airport on the Chicago lakefront where the simulator was programmed to start, and fly between the skyscrapers of the city toward whatever destination I chose. But the on-screen scenery turned out to be sketchy and uninteresting. Worse, I had no idea how to “land” the plane, at Meigs or anywhere else, and the program was not much help in teaching me. After ten or twenty flights that ended mainly with nosedives into the lake or countryside, I decided I could have more fun in other ways.

A dozen years later I became interested in learning to fly (and land) real airplanes, and I thought I should look at simulators again. There were now a

range of programs, which were much more effective in teaching flying skills—or at least certain skills. They had also become a form of entertainment and virtual adventure captivating enough to attract vast numbers of users worldwide. According to *Guinness World Records 2001*, Microsoft’s Flight Simulator had sold a total of 21 million copies by June of 1999.

Simulators’ success is certainly deserved. Not many people fly real airplanes; fewer than 650,000 Americans are licensed pilots. But a larger group probably would like to fly. And even people who have almost no interest in flying (surely everybody finds it a *little* bit exciting to pretend to zoom through the air) or who view computer games as inherently creepy would find it hard to ignore the best modern versions. On a big, high-resolution computer screen you can find yourself facing an amazing-

ly exact rendition of a Learjet cockpit, flying low over the Grand Canyon at dawn, with flashes of lightning visible in the distance, as you listen to air-traffic controllers direct you to the Flagstaff airport. You can take off in a pontoon plane from a lagoon in Bali, fly over paddies on the terraced hillsides, and then head toward Java’s volcanic craters. You can approach Ayers Rock, in the center of Australia, and watch shadows move across it as the sun goes down. You can indulge in much of the visual romance of flying, without the time, expense, and training required to pilot a real plane.

These riveting effects are the result of an intriguing *de facto* division of labor. The programs themselves are all commercial products, from Microsoft and a number of small firms. But a wide variety of add-ons and improvements come from tens of thousands of hobbyists around the world, who spend countless hours polishing or improving some aspect of a program—and then post their work on the Internet for others to share. The flight-sim culture is a delightful reminder of a long-forgotten era, somewhere back in the 1990s, when people were excited about creating software for the new things it would let them do, not simply as a means of gaining market share and the grail of an IPO.

The flight-sim market resembles the rest of the software business mainly in that the most popular offering is from Microsoft. The current version of Microsoft’s program is Flight Simulator 2000, or FS2000, which computer discounters offer for about \$50. (A “professional” version costs about \$70. It includes more simulated airplanes and a larger number of places whose scenery is presented in extra-realistic detail.) With FS2000 and most other programs you can “fly” from practically any point on earth to any other; the differences among the programs lie mostly in the degree of scenic detail, plus certain aspects of the airplanes’ look and performance. With all these programs you can also specify the weather conditions through which you’ll pass on any particular trip: clouds, wind, turbulence, rain. The fanciest programs let you download the real-time weather for your route, from aviation sites on the Internet. Then you can see what it would be like

PLASTOCK

to pilot a plane from Buffalo to Detroit through the blustery night weather occurring just now. As with other Microsoft products, FS2000's strengths are related to its role as the industry standard. More hobbyists develop new airplanes or bits of scenery for this program than for the others. Its main shortcoming is its slow "frame rate," which can result in a jerky on-screen image if the program is run on what is now considered a slow computer or one without an up-to-date video-display card.

Although in many software categories Microsoft's product has become dominant, in flight sims there are still lively alternatives. The main ones are Flight Unlimited III (FU3), by Electronic Arts; Fly! 2K, by Gathering of Developers; Pro Pilot 99, abandoned by its previous owner, Sierra Software, but being revived by ETC Interactive; and X-Plane, developed and sold by one Austin Meyer, of Columbia, South Carolina. X-Plane sells for \$39; the others cost around \$20. Each of these programs has not only dedicated users but also a reserve army of hobbyists creating enhancements and add-ons. Devotees discuss the programs endlessly on the main flight-sim Web sites, which include avsim.com and flight sim.com, and the Internet newsgroup rec.aviation.simulator.

At these prices the other companies won't be able to pour money into further developing their simulators the way Microsoft can, and some of the competitors will probably disappear. But they have lasted this long—creating a far more diverse offering than is now available in, say, the word-processor market—for several reasons. Because they don't cost much, people can own several flight sims and enjoy switching back and forth. The switching is easy, because when the simulators are used with the right settings and equipment, they work in practically identical ways. The right equipment includes a joystick, which lets you steer the plane in a realistic fashion rather than by typing at the keyboard, and (okay, go ahead and laugh) a set of pedals that replicate the ones a pilot pushes to control the rudder of a plane. These attachments cost about \$100 apiece; I use and

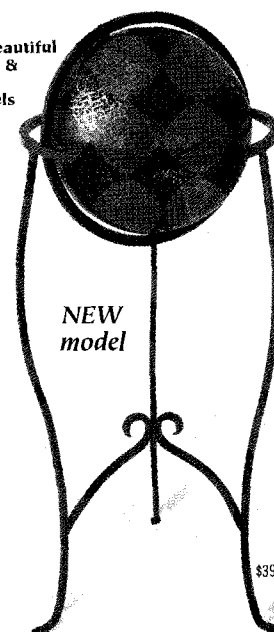
like the Microsoft Force Feedback joystick, and Simped-vario model pedals from the German manufacturer Hofmann. CH Products, of Vista, California, also makes popular pedals and joysticks. I don't want anyone ever to see me while I'm using this gear, but I do use it, because it makes the simulator feel more like an airplane—and reminds me that I'm not just sitting there doing my normal keyboard work.

A good reason to sample the full range of flight sims is that none of them does everything, but each excels in its own way. FU3 has great scenery for a few cities, and unlike FS2000, it comes with some built-in simulated air-traffic-control radio functions. You create a flight plan and the computerized controller tells you what to do ("Climb and maintain 10,000 feet"). But the program leaves out a lot of cities, and its renditions of cockpit instrument panels look primitive. Fly! 2K runs much more smoothly on-screen than FS2000 does, but it has blocky-looking scenery. Pro Pilot 99 also has a built-in air-traffic controller, and offers quick and easy ways to specify the conditions of your flight (where you'd like the cloud layers, what kind of turbulence you'll meet, and so forth). But the way it displays hillsides, mountain slopes, and other scenery is only so-so. X-Plane's enthusiasts say that its underlying mathematical design gives it the best "flight model" of all the simulators—that is, its computerized airplane responds to commands very much the way a real plane would. This is not by accident. Its thirty-one-year-old creator, Austin Meyer, has been an instrument-rated pilot since he was a teenager. He developed the program when he was in college, to help keep his instrument-flying skills from getting rusty. X-Plane is the one simulator that behaves anything like a real plane throughout the process of landing. Its scenery, though, is less impressive than the other sims.

The good parts of all the programs keep getting better, because of those hobbyists and their burgeoning offerings on the major Web sites. Thousands of scenery supplements are available free for FS2000, and hundreds for the other

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programs. The big step toward dramatically more-realistic-looking scenery came when FS2000 was released, in the fall of 1999. Previous versions of the program had presented the world basically as a flat surface, onto which polygons representing mountains were plunked down. FS2000 introduced a far more accurate "terrain-mesh" system. Real-world data from satellites and geodetic surveys are mapped onto a topographic model of the earth's surface, with each square kilometer rendered at its actual average elevation. The "software developer kit" that Microsoft offers free with FS2000 allows hobbyists to apply the same approach and create much-finer detail using smaller geographic increments. I have admired scenery of, say, the area around Mount Fuji rendered with a mesh unit of fifty square meters—400 times as detailed as the basic one-kilometer mesh. Eddie Denney, a thirty-five-year-old staff sergeant and helicopter repairman in the Army, has used the developer kit to create a detailed topographic model of the United States that is available free at avsim.com and flightsim.com. Denney offers other scenery, for a modest price, at his own site, www.flightsimnetwork.com/realscene. He started by using a ten-meter-mesh unit to create models of the Grand Canyon and Mount St. Helens for his own amusement, and decided to post his terrain on the Web site because "everybody likes to share their work."

Other add-ons, most of which are free, let you fly different kinds of planes—the *Spirit of St. Louis*, Air Force One, the space shuttle. Hobbyists, largely in Europe, have created virtual airlines, with whole fleets of imaginary Airbuses and DC-10s that fly on schedule from London to Berlin and from Amsterdam to New York's JFK. I have visited a Web site run by a virtual air-traffic controller. Flight-sim users around the world send him their flight plans—say, Los Angeles to San Francisco, departing at noon. He tells them when they're cleared for take-off and follows their route by way of Internet messages. A disproportionately large number of add-on planes are exquisitely detailed representations of Boeing 747s or 777s, with all the dials and controls in working order. With a good computer monitor, the right scen-

ery add-ons, and the joystick and pedals, you can feel like an airline captain instead of one of the passengers habitually grousing in the back of the plane.

I asked several hobbyists, by phone and e-mail, why they had worked so hard to customize the aerial view of Boston Harbor or to re-create the cockpit of an F-18 only to give the results away. All of them said that they had designed the features because they wanted to use them on their own machines, and then saw no reason not to let others try them too. There's clearly a competition among hobbyists—a matter of pride rather than of money—to create the add-on scenery that gets downloaded most often (the sites keep count) or that gets the most-enthusiastic online reviews. The hobbyist-designers are an energetic subset of the general population of flight-sim users, attracted by the aesthetic appeal and the instructive aspects of pretending to fly.

The instructive aspects do not include teaching the basics of how to fly. Today's flight sims are at best neutral, and may even be harmful, in what is called primary flight training—learning how to handle and land a plane without killing yourself. Here the recency of my own primary flight training (I took flying lessons three years ago) may give me a particularly clear perspective, because I remember what it is like to learn. Although flying involves countless checklists and formal procedures, nothing really works until you have also developed certain instincts: how light a touch you have to use on the yoke, so you won't overcontrol the plane and send it porpoising through the sky; how the runway should look throughout the approach for landing if you want to be neither too low nor too high. The flight sims are poor at all of this. For instance, in a sim you can get a good look at the runway only when you're heading straight for it. In a real plane you're constantly looking out the side window to judge your height above the runway as you fly the prescribed rectangular pattern around the airport to prepare for landing.

But the simulators are extremely useful in the next stage of training—instrument flight. This is an intellectual rather than an instinctive process. The point of

the training is precisely to teach you how to ignore the sensations of your body, which may misleadingly suggest that the plane is climbing or turning, and instead to keep the plane flying straight and level by continually scanning the instruments. You learn to navigate by interpreting fairly arcane needles and gauges—finding, for example, an imaginary intersection in the sky where the "255 radial" from one radio-navigation station crosses the "135 radial" from another. (A radial is a line drawn from a station at a certain magnetic heading: The 090 radial heads ninety degrees, or due east, from a station. The 180 radial heads due south. You work all this out on little dials.) For instrument training, flight sims are ideal. You change a setting to block the outside view with clouds, add turbulence or strong winds, and then use only the panel to see if you can get the plane to its destination. I spent many hours with Pro Pilot 99 and Jeppesen's FlitePro, a program designed solely for instrument training, before getting my instrument rating, two years ago, and I continue to practice, usually with X-Plane or FS2000, before taking real flights in the clouds.

If instrument training is the useful part of flight sims, the exhilarating part is taking off in a certain direction and seeing what wonders unfold beneath you. This, to me, is the engrossing part of real flying, too. You head east out of Seattle, and soon enough there's Idaho, and the open range of Montana, and the beginning of the Midwest. Everyone understands the concept of how the states fit together, but seeing them in one continuous band, from an altitude low enough to make out individual farmhouses clustered in the prairie, yet high enough to see the way rivers and ridgelines snake around communities, is very different from looking at a map. And to take off from Charles de Gaulle, circle the monuments of Paris, and then head north until the cliffs of Dover come into view is something I don't expect ever to do in a real airplane. The cliffs looked beautiful, just a moment ago, on my computer screen. ■

ON THE WEB: See the online version of this article, at www.theatlantic.com/flightsim, for screen shots taken from programs discussed here and for links to related Web sites.

GARDENS
**TOURING BY
 THE BOOK**

The Garden Conservancy's Open Days Directory *encourages snooping in the interests of a good cause*

BY HATSY SHIELDS

.....

The urge subsides during the winter, but then, as regularly as the arrival of March, it takes hold like an undertow, dragging me outdoors, even out of state. It's time to poke around gardens. I don't mean only my own, where by now I've already sifted through frozen leaves in search of the scillas' first sapphire bells, and turned over forkfuls of wet soil to sprinkle lettuce seeds, as fine as ground pepper. Other people's gardens, too, draw me. Horticultural expertise and strong design should be reasons enough to study a landscape, but my appetite is less practical. I'm on the lookout for the gardener's spirit.

Beautiful or bizarre, sometimes both, the gardens I find most intriguing are strewn with clues to personality. Picture, for instance, the regal reach of 200-year-old live oaks in a garden I visited recently in Austin, Texas. Gigantic exotic seashells hung from the branches, twisting in the wind. Glittery chandeliers strung with loops of pearls and crystals dangled from trees near the house, in which a second-floor window framed a pair of white knee-high go-go boots. Upright under a bush sat a bigger-than-life bald and naked baby doll—not an abandoned toy (the owner, Jane Schweppe, a philanthropist, has no children) but a carefully placed ornament. Silver and blue marbles sparkled in the paths, and the dry borders were rife with the foliage of a rare and wonderful collection of South African bulbs that in spring burst into color. The sensibility that warbles in this garden is unlike any I've encountered back home in New England.

The way into hundreds of fetching private gardens around the United States is *The Garden Conservancy's Open Days Directory*, an ample paperback published each winter that lists gardens open to the public on specified



An Open Days participant: the Our Own Stuff Gallery Garden, in Berkeley, California

days from March to October. Modeled on Great Britain's wildly popular Yellow Book (which I discussed in this magazine in March of 1996), the directory is arranged by state—gardens in twenty-four states are listed this year—and includes maps, dates when the gardens will be open, and descriptions, written by the gardens' owners, of almost 400 gardens. The Open Days program was launched in 1995 to help fund the con-

servancy's primary mission: the identification and preservation of American gardens so exceptional that the organization deems them part of the nation's cultural heritage. So far The Garden Conservancy has taken seventeen properties under its wing. The Open Days gardens (they earn money for the conservancy by way of sales of the directory, which costs \$15.95, and also by way of coupons for admission to the gardens, six for \$25) are a separate group, chosen by volunteer representatives scattered across the country and making up a kaleidoscopic assortment; no uniform standard is applied for inclusion. Arbitrary though the selection may be, people flock to take a look: Open Days gardens attracted more than 54,000 visitors last year.

The only national publication of its kind, the Open Days directory has guided me from Narragansett Bay to Pebble Beach. One of the richest troves of lovely gardens on our continent lies in the rolling countryside north of New York City. In Westchester County for a family wedding last June, with a sunny, free Sunday before us, my hus-

band, Bill, and I pulled the 2000 directory out of the glove compartment. We skimmed the text for gardens that promised something in addition to roaring, robust plant life. Why, there was Ice Pond Farm, owned by my childhood figure-skating idol Dick Button, which was said to include a bocce court in an allée of crab apples. Another listed garden belonged to Page Dickey, a garden writer whose book on landscape de-

signers I had read with interest. We were assured we'd find world-class statuary on the property of Barbara Israel, a dealer in antique garden ornaments.

That Sunday the hedged enclosures of Page Dickey's Duck Hill, in North Salem, New York, were completely captivating, the beds of phlox, peonies, foxgloves, roses, and bleeding hearts all in crisp nurse-white bloom. Clematis clambered through the fruit trees, and the smoky-blue branches of *rosa glauca* arched gracefully over mounds of sweet, tiny-flowered amsonias. Here and there spikes of yellow mullein had toppled into the gravel paths that defined the herb beds; these overflowed with unruly mints, thyme, and fragrant miniature pinks. Sprawling cranesbills, nepeta, and wild marjoram had been allowed to blur but not quite subvert the tidy lines of outdoor garden rooms that complement the old farmhouse at the heart of the garden.

When Bill and I came upon Dickey herself, she was sitting outside the kitchen door under a crab-apple tree with the unread Sunday *New York Times* in her lap. Visitors surrounded her. She couldn't identify every one of her hundreds of plants, but she hazarded that the perky-faced annual tucked into a corner of the perennial border was *nemophila* "Pennie Black." "Once, I could list every plant by heart," she said, "but somewhere along the way I lost control. Still, my favorites will always be the charming, old-fashioned flowers, species before cultivars, and especially the fragrant ones." Later, in a lull between waves of inquiries, she surveyed the garden and mused, "I hope something will be in bloom next month. I'm getting married in the white garden on July first."

I could envision an enchanting Tasha Tudor-like scene, with dewy rose petals fluttering down on the perfect bride, her groom, and a squad of doted-on dogs (Dickey owns three). Strolling through a garden, for me, is like eavesdropping on a life.

I'm not alone in this. On the same day, last October, when I toured Jane Schweppe's garden, in Austin, my first stop was the home of James David, a landscape architect, and his partner,

Gary Peese. Visitors were everywhere: wandering the aisles of a greenhouse filled with containers of forced bulbs, clucking at hens in a chicken coop, resting on limestone steps, peering through the glass doors of the modern house, built at the top of a steep ravine. I overheard a woman pressed up to a window say to her companion, "Oh, look! It's that chic new kind of bathroom with no doors. All tiled with a drain in the middle of the floor. And there's a bed and desk, right in the same room."

But to return to New York State: A few horse pastures away from Duck Hill, along a winding stream and down a shady dirt road, Bill parked and we crossed a cattle grate and trudged up a driveway to Willow Green Farm. What immediately grabbed my attention wasn't the country garden, although the welcoming green fields flowed uphill

At Glebelands, in southern Vermont, which I visited later in the summer, there was another remarkable collection of statuary, but this was all part of the property's history. The garden's design is a curious combination of the rigid and the relaxed. Formal beds, exotic gazebos, fountains, and a reflecting pool are set on thirty acres that also incorporate woodland walks, two millponds, and a waterfall. The vision is partly that of Mrs. A.V.S. Olcott (as she prefers to be known), who bought the property in 1985, and partly that of one Pauline Hardy, who was the owner in the thirties. Mrs. Olcott has long served as the Garden Club of America's official historian, and she helped me to picture Hardy wrapped in a fluttering peignoir, a book of poetry in hand as she floated in a tin rowboat—the very boat I saw tied to a willow tree. This capricious

*Beautiful or bizarre, often both, the gardens
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is like eavesdropping on a life.*

to a gabled summerhouse like something out of an Ingmar Bergman movie, and wildflower beds melted seamlessly into the woods. It was the intensity of the gardener, the fiction writer Roxana Robinson, who was fervently instructing a visitor on the ways of organic gardening. "I only use soaps, never pesticides," she explained. "Wait—I'll get the catalogue." She dashed inside, returning with "Gardens Alive!," which offered kelp sprays, coconut-based anti-slug powders, and grub-devouring nematodes. Environmental education was a bonus at this garden. I am now a proud dues-paying member of an organic-gardening club sponsored by the publisher of "Gardens Alive!"

We missed Ice Pond Farm altogether (my scheduling isn't perfect) and stopped only briefly at Barbara Israel's garden, where price tags flipped in the breeze: \$17,500 for a pair of large stone planters, \$1,500 for a cast-iron grapevine seat. Lead urns, Romanesque wellheads, and spouting frog fountains were all on the block.

creature, while digging and dividing irises in the heat of an August morning, would suddenly rip off her muddy clothes so that she could splash in a tiled pool.

In a domed temple at the foot of descending terraces brimming with blue baptisias, fragrant phlox, martagon lilies, and peonies, Mrs. Olcott paused to let me study a graceful statue of a maiden lifting her skirts to reveal a bare foot. Not just any bare foot: "Diane de Poitiers's, in all likelihood, because of the"—here Mrs. Olcott pointed—"fused toes." Unusual toe configurations cropped up regularly within the French aristocracy, my hostess informed me; the trait was regarded as a badge of noble birth. The pretty *duchesse* had sailed home with the Hardys from one of their trips "between the wars." Family heirlooms of Mrs. Olcott's on the property included an Italian marble table supported by winged lions, now placed in the apple orchard, and a statue of a small boy throttling a dove nestled under the ancient arborvitae. As we circled one of

the millponds, which is bordered by a hundred-yard-long marble dam, Mrs. Olcott recounted a signal moment in local history, the day the dam broke: "September sixth, 1901." After a glance at my blank face she added, "The day, as you'll remember, President McKinley was shot."

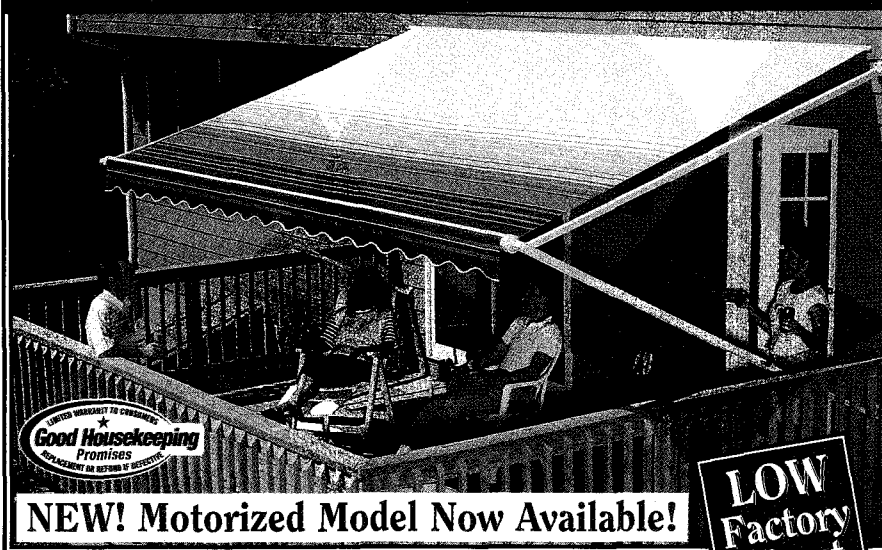
Bill came with me to Putney, Vermont, about an hour's drive southeast, where Gordon and Mary Hayward make their home. Gordon is a professional garden designer who writes useful garden treatises; Mary is a forthright, friendly schoolteacher. I soon decided that this was a garden in which to find architectural lessons rather than to probe for eccentricity. It is a model of pleasing proportions, coherence, and engaging vistas.

Nine distinct areas reveal themselves coyly, around a bend, through an arch, or at the end of an allée, and each of these outdoor rooms provides specific growing conditions. I could have spent hours jotting down lists of the plants that thrived in the dry shade, the sun, the hedged herb beds, the boggy pool. From the garden's compelling main axis, a line from the front door of the 200-year-old house to a distant apple tree, side paths enticed us to explore beyond the geometric core. Along the way Gordon Hayward earnestly explained his carefully juxtaposed plant arrangements: "You see how the apple tree canopies the pyramidal evergreen chamaecyparis, itself silhouetted against the creamy curtain of variegated dogwoods?" He is a master of spatial relationships.

In a spasm of motivation when we returned home, Bill ordered two pallets of fieldstones. He would lay Hayward-inspired paths in our own wildish, unfocused garden to direct visitors' footsteps. Someday. Those rocks sit reproachfully in a hulking heap next to our compost pile. ▀

The Garden Conservancy's Open Days Directory can be ordered from the conservancy by calling 888-842-2442 or by writing P.O. Box 219, Cold Spring, NY 10516. The last page of the directory contains an order form for the coupons required for garden visits. (Send a check for \$45.95, which includes shipping, to the conservancy's P.O. box to receive the directory together with six coupons.) Information about The Garden Conservancy is available online at www.gardenconservancy.org.

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BOOKS & CRITICS

BOOKS

**THE RICHNESS OF
THE MOMENT**

The nine ambiguous, anticlimactic novels of Henry Green, our author writes, "raised the pedestrian to the sublime"

BY BROOKE ALLEN

Henry Green, who died in 1973 at the age of sixty-eight, was one of the best English novelists of the twentieth century, and the hardest to classify. By some standards a modernist and an experimentalist (his style was so oblique that his American disciple Terry Southern was prompted to call him not merely a writer's writer but a writer's writer's writer), he was also defiantly anti-intellectual, always scorning literary conversation in favor of gossip. His prose tended toward high intensity, but it could be awkward, even bumbling. And he made a whole career of ignoring fashion, writing a proletarian novel during the heyday of the Bright Young Things and switching incongruously to brittle drawing-room comedy during the austerity-conscious era of the Angry Young Men.

By all rights Green's novels should be among the well-thumbed classics of twentieth-century literature. He has always been held in the highest esteem by his fellow writers: W. H. Auden considered him during his acme to be "the best English novelist alive"; Eudora Welty, writing in the 1960s, stated her opinion that Green's work had "an intensity greater than that of any other writer of imaginative fiction today." Philip Toynbee considered him one of the most important writers in the language. John Updike, writing two decades after Green's death, gave perhaps the highest praise of all: "Henry Green was a novelist of such rarity, such mar-

vellous originality, intuition, sensuality, and finish, that every fragment of his work is precious."

Yet despite all the accolades Green's nine novels have remained the enthusiasm of a coterie, and a surprising number of well-read people draw a blank at his name. Green insisted on anonymity: he wrote under a bland pseudonym (his real name was Henry Yorke) and usually refused to be photographed except from the rear, or to provide any personal information to the press. The privacy he sought in life has obfuscated his posthumous reputation, and every decade or so, it seems, he has to be introduced afresh.

The process is playing itself out again with the appearance of *Romancing: The Life and Work of Henry Green*, by Jeremy

**ROMANCING:
THE LIFE AND WORK
OF HENRY GREEN**

by Jeremy Treglown

Random House,
352 pages, \$26.95

Treglown, a former editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* and the biographer of Roald Dahl. Treglown's enterprise appears to have been fraught with problems from the beginning. Green's son, Sebastian Yorke, authorized the biography in 1991 and then changed his mind a year later, so Treglown had to battle on with many doors closed to him. The Yorke family has every reason to mistrust

such a project, for a biographer in any way unsympathetic to the eccentric novelist could produce a damaging portrait: Green's countless sexual infidelities, his streak of emotional sadism, and his spectacular alcoholic decline during the twenty years between his last novel and his death do not make for very edifying reading. But to quote Harold Ross, "Talent doesn't care where

CECIL BEATON, COURTESY OF SOTHEBY'S, LONDON



it resides," and Treglown has managed to produce a fine biography that is profoundly appreciative of its odd subject, warts included.

Most first-rate British writers have come from the middle classes. Green was unique, as Treglown points out, in that he was both an aristocrat and an industrialist. His mother, a daughter of the second Baron Leconfield, was brought up at Petworth, one of the great houses of England. His father, Vincent Yorke, was a brilliant classicist who turned to business, taking over a failing copper-smith's and turning it into a profitable supplier of brewery equipment and plumbing supplies. H. Pontifex & Sons became a family concern, of which Henry would eventually assume rather incompetent control.

"If one side of Yorke found the silver spoon a handicap to respiration," the novelist Anthony Powell, his lifelong friend, commented,

another accepted it as understandably welcome; and coming to terms with opposed inner feelings about his family circumstances, his writing, his business activities, his social life, was something he never quite managed to achieve to his own satisfaction.

Powell's observation was, if anything, an understatement: Henry Yorke's ultra-conservative background combined with his subversive nature and sense of himself as an outsider to make for a life of irreconcilable values and longings, to such a point that, as one friend said, there was a real difference "between Henry Yorke, who could be very grand and rather sharp, surprising people by putting them in their place, and the sympathetic, unthreatening Henry Green."

Yorke was born in 1905 and had a conventional upper-class childhood at the family estate in Gloucestershire, though he preferred billiards to the more traditional hunting and shooting; unlike his two dashing elder brothers, he was a "plump, uncompetitive, and nervous" child. At Eton and Oxford his eccentric outlook and what was developing into a powerful personal charm began to make their mark on his contemporaries, a remarkable group that included Anthony Powell, Robert Byron, Harold Acton, Bri-

an Howard, Cyril Connolly, and Evelyn Waugh. He made no attempt to shine academically, though: he attended the cinema twice every day at Oxford; scorned his tutor, the bluff, hearty C. S. Lewis; and resented being compelled to study, he said, "when I have my own work always running in my mind."

That work was his precocious first novel, *Blindness* (1926), published under the pen name Henry Green by J. M. Dent when the author was only twenty-one. Although in many ways autobiographical, it is not the solipsistic exercise one would expect from an undergraduate but a mature effort bearing all the hallmarks of his later work: the awkward yet uniquely descriptive prose, the quick observation, and the deep vein of black comedy that anticipated the "sick humor" of the 1950s and 1960s.

At the end of 1926 Green left Oxford without a degree and at his own request joined the family firm at the bottom, as a factory laborer; he wanted, he said, to write a novel about workingmen. He spent two years toiling at Pontifex's Birmingham factory and living in a boardinghouse that was, he gleefully wrote to a friend, right out of Balzac. But apart from his Birmingham idyll, Green's life was unexceptionally class-bound and conventional. One of his brothers died of leukemia in 1917, and the other proved too eccentric for a business career, so it was he who became his father's partner in Pontifex's London office. In 1929 he married a distant cousin, Adelaide ("Dig") Biddulph, and the couple embarked on an active social life. (Waugh teasingly referred to them as "Mr H. Yorke the lavatory king and his pretty wife.") Like others of their class, they occasionally visited the Continent during the inter-war years, but Green didn't like traveling: "It interferes with my masturbation," he complained. In 1939 he published *Party Going*, an apparently slight but haunting, almost Beckettian novel about the insignificant doings of a vacuous group of socialites.

Party Going proved too uncommercial for even the tolerant Dent, and Green moved to the Hogarth Press, under John Lehmann and Leonard Woolf. Upon the outbreak of war, under the impression that he would soon be killed, he wrote a

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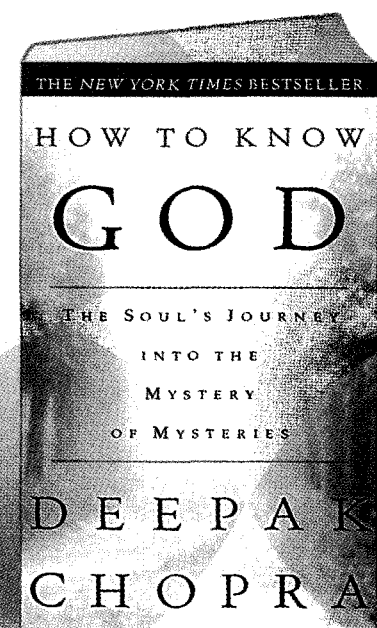
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hasty memoir, *Pack My Bag*; sent Dig and their small son, Sebastian, to safety in the country; and joined the Auxiliary Fire Service in London, where he spent several not unenjoyable years fighting incendiary bombs and tomcatting around with various smart and what one friend called "high-octane" ladies. Green was a notorious charmer with a streak of cruelty: "*Hurting*—that should be the title of your next novel," complained one of his girlfriends. What spare time remained to him was spent on *Caught* (1943), a novel about the London blitz and his fire-service experiences, a brilliantly truthful portrait of wartime London—so truthful, in fact, that Green was afraid to give permission for a German translation, lest it bolster enemy morale. Leonard Woolf had complained that it represented the fire station "as completely inefficient and corrupt from top to bottom without a single redeeming feature or even averagely competent and honest person in it."

Loving (1945) is widely thought to be Green's masterpiece. Sensual, amoral, absurd, it depicts a group of English servants living it up in a great Irish house in wartime, tippling, fornicating, fiddling the books, and generally enjoying themselves. It is—oddly, after five years of war—the least dark of Green's books, full of joy and pleasure and beauty, and its popularity is easy to understand. Yet to settle on this, or any other, as Green's "best" book is difficult, for each of the novels is entirely original and unlike the others. And although *Loving* constitutes an apex of sorts, it is hard to see the subsequent books as marking a decline.

There have been repeated attempts to place Green within the left-wing movement of the 1930s, but this project is hopeless: what really interested him was humanity as a whole, rather than as an arrangement of classes, and the human animals he was to depict throughout his career were recognizably of the same species whether they were to be found on the factory floor, in the butler's pantry, or dining at the Ritz.

Green's dialogue, whoever utters it, is peerless. In one of his very few artistic pronouncements he claimed that the writer's duty is "to meet as many pedes-

trian people as possible and to listen to the most pedestrian conversation." He raised the pedestrian to the sublime. His fine ear registered all the inconsequentialities, the non sequiturs, and the brainless repetitions of ordinary discourse. In a short story by Green, from the posthumously published collection *Surviving* (1992), some men from the wartime Auxiliary Fire Service chat desultorily in a pub.

"Ow much a week, now, is this job you've got behind that bar worth to you?" the fourth man went on.

The barman ignored it. Instead he remarked: 'I seen Sam Race this morning.'

'Well, I think I'll risk a brown, Joe. Out of the large bottle.'

'Pronto. Yes, 'e looked very queer, did old Sambo.'

'Sam who?'

'Sam Race. Why you must remember him, Ted.'

'Wally Race you mean.'

This sort of conversation can go on for two or three pages at a time, but instead of getting tedious it becomes poetic. Here is another example, from *Doting* (1952):

'But, d'you know, three people died in my ward, while I was there?'

'Don't, darling' said his mother.

'I really think you might have put me in a private room.'

'Where was the money to come from?' his father asked.

'There you go again, Arthur' Mrs Middleton complained. 'When Peter's all we have!' Then, in a sinister voice, she added 'Now!'

'Thirty guineas a week?' the husband queried.

'Three days' she answered. 'And how much in that time do you spend on gin?'

'Oh come, Diana darling, you like your glass as well.'

'I need it' she replied, emphatically.

'Yes, at least three people died' Peter interjected.

The fidelity to heard speech is striking, and is one of the reasons that many people have been tempted to call Green a naturalist. But the term is not really satisfactory, because Green's writing can also seem harshly labored: he never, over the course of his thirty-year career, stopped experimenting. *Living* (1929) dealt with workingmen, and it evokes the stark life of the workers with a strenuous,

pared-down prose in which all definite articles are omitted; the resulting style is mannered to the point of affectation. Still, *Living* contains some passages of extraordinary beauty. In later and more skillful books, such as *Loving* and *Caught*, the prose can be exquisite, and quite unlike that of anyone else. Here, for instance, from *Loving*, are Raunce the butler and the maid he adores:

'Oh Edie,' he gasped, moving forward. The room had grown immeasurably dark from the storm massed outside. Their two bodies flowed into one as he put his arms about her. The shape they made was crowned with his head, on top of a white sharp curved neck, dominating and cruel over the blur that was her mass of hair through which her lips sucked at him warm and heady.

'Edie,' he muttered, breaking away only to drive his face down into hers once more. But he was pressing her back into a bow shape. 'Edie,' he called again.

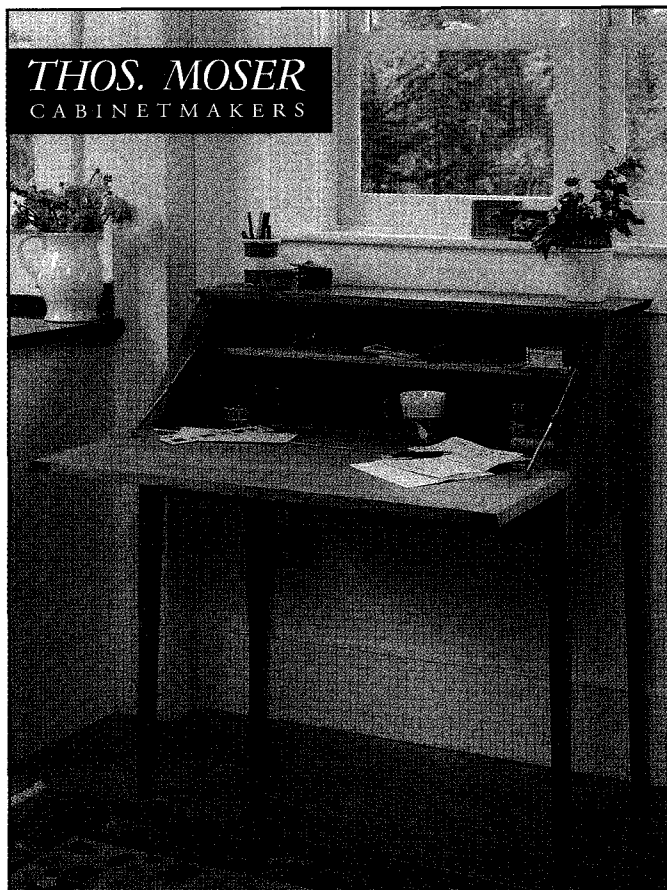
Green's aversion to "good English," which he felt tended to fall into clichés or unthinking, regular rhythms, often led him into knotty structures and abortive thoughts. What he wrote about one of his literary idols, C. M. Doughty, the author of *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (1888), applied equally to himself, for better or worse: "He has no elegance, that is, no ease with which to treat of a universal theme ... His style is mannered but he is too great a man to be hidden beneath it ... He is often obscure. He is always magnificent."

Green eventually turned his back on descriptive prose and composed his last two novels, *Nothing* (1950) and *Doting*, almost entirely in dialogue. Some have considered these books superficial, dealing, as they do, entirely with spoiled, jaded, upper-middle-class drones; others have found them sublime. Green, as Treglown puts it, succeeded brilliantly in plumbing the "aching shallows" of middle age, and he was clearly as fond of his lustful, feebly conniving middle-aged men, vapid girlfriends, and controlling wives as he was of earlier characters that might by conventional standards be deemed more worthwhile. And in their sheer absurdity *Nothing* and *Doting* are two of the funniest novels ever written, bringing to an almost abstract essence

the humor that had always been woven through Green's work. A contemporary critic wrote of *Party Going*, "We were continually held up because it was so funny: almost every page sent us into fits of laughter. Yet an hour afterwards none of us remembered the book as comic." Green's readers will instantly recognize the effect: although one doesn't think of him as a primarily comic author, he seldom wrote a page that wasn't tinged with dark humor.

Doting was published when Green was forty-six. It is easy to blame the silence of his last twenty years on his drinking, but it is also probable that he simply had nothing more to write: the nine novels compose an oddly complete oeuvre. Green might be called the master of the anticlimax. No one in his novels is transformed or improved by experience, and no one is rewarded or punished. Every one of his books expresses, as Treglown writes, "the sense that most of the dramas in most people's lives fail to transform anything"—or, as *Doting's* wonderful last line has it, "The next day they all went on very much the same." None of Green's characters is what most of us would call an interesting person, and they are all, without exception, selfish and unregenerate from beginning to end. But they are presented to us with a cheerful lack of judgment that amounts, in the end, to filial love.

Henry Green was one of the most lyrically gifted writers in our language. What reader can forget Amabel in her bath in *Party Going*, or Edith feeding the peacocks in *Loving*? What the scholar George Painter wrote of *Concluding* (1948) could just as easily apply to any of Green's other novels (*Back*, published in 1946, completes the group): it is "unforgettable; and not the least of its ambiguous charms is that the reader will never know just what it is he is unable to forget." Green got as close as anyone can get to being a pure artist. None of his books, thankfully, illustrates a philosophy, promotes a theme, or delivers a message. With him it is the richness of the felt, heard, and seen moment, often garnished with low comedy, that is the sole point—if, indeed, there is any point at all. 

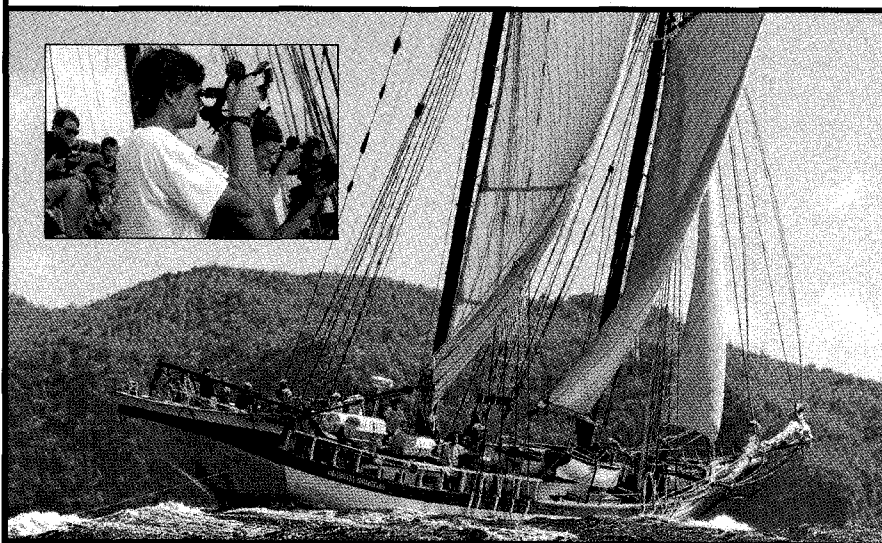


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GETTING STATES' RIGHTS RIGHT

The first comprehensive history of a much misunderstood doctrine

BY EUGENE D. GENOVESE

.....

States' rights, Vernon L. Parrington wrote in *Main Currents in American Thought* (1927), "was not an abstract principle but an expression of the psychology of localism created by everyday habit." No, Parrington was not a southern conservative, much less a blood-and-soil reactionary. A decidedly left-wing, in fact radical, midwesterner, he emerged as a prime architect of the "progressive" interpretation of American history. Forrest McDonald, who makes a similar point from a more conservative perspective, should nonetheless expect to be labeled a neo-fascist for writing, with eminent good sense, "Programmed into the human soul is a preference for the near and familiar and a suspicion of the remote and abstract."

The doctrine of states' rights provokes fierce negative responses and much knee-jerk denunciation, especially among those who do not have a clue to its meaning. Yet not all of the responses can be attributed to ignorance and ideological bias, for the doctrine's peculiar political history has had a dark side. As McDonald ruefully observes, twice in American history it became identified with discreditable causes—slavery and racial segregation—with which it has no intrinsic connection. Those who insist on an intrinsic connection and dismiss the doctrine as a mere rationale for reactionary politics have a serious problem: If the defenders of slavery and segregation rested their constitutional cases on states' rights, so did the progressives who strove to curb the power of entrenched corporate wealth. Thus Parrington wrote that the repudiation of states' rights by those who properly opposed slavery proved "disastrous to American democracy," because it removed the last brake on the power of big capital and surrendered the country "to the principle of capitalistic exploitation." Indeed, although we tend to think of federal intervention as "pro-



States' rights or federal power? The example of Andrew Jackson—"King Andrew the First," as he was styled by an opponent in this 1832 cartoon—cuts both ways

gressive" and the relegation of regulatory power to the states as "reactionary," the historical record shows nothing of the sort. After the Civil War the federal government, notably the courts, smoothed the way for big-business combinations ("pools," "trusts"), and it was the states that initiated restrictions.

Parrington and others largely interjected their reflections on states' rights *en passant*, and their work does not gainsay McDonald's claim that no one

has attempted a comprehensive history of the subject. McDonald brings exceptional credentials to this task, for he ranks among the most learned and incisive of American historians, as readily at home with constitutional history and theory as with intellectual, political, and economic history. In particular he brings his considerable acumen to bear on knotty problems that may seem abstract but have grave and direct political consequences. The nature of

STATES' RIGHTS AND THE UNION: IMPERIUM IN IMPERIO, 1776-1876

by Forrest McDonald

University Press of Kansas,
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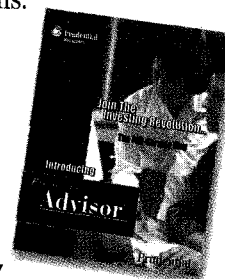
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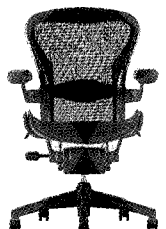
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"sovereignty" and the possibility and desirability of dividing it has absorbed political theorists since ancient times and especially absorbed the Founding Fathers, who made a Herculean effort to establish a republic of an unprecedented kind over a territory vast enough to constitute an empire. McDonald works through the theoretical formulations and attendant practical consequences with a sure hand. No small bonus: he writes well and has a gift for explaining complex theories in plain and often spirited English that readers without a Ph.D. can follow easily.

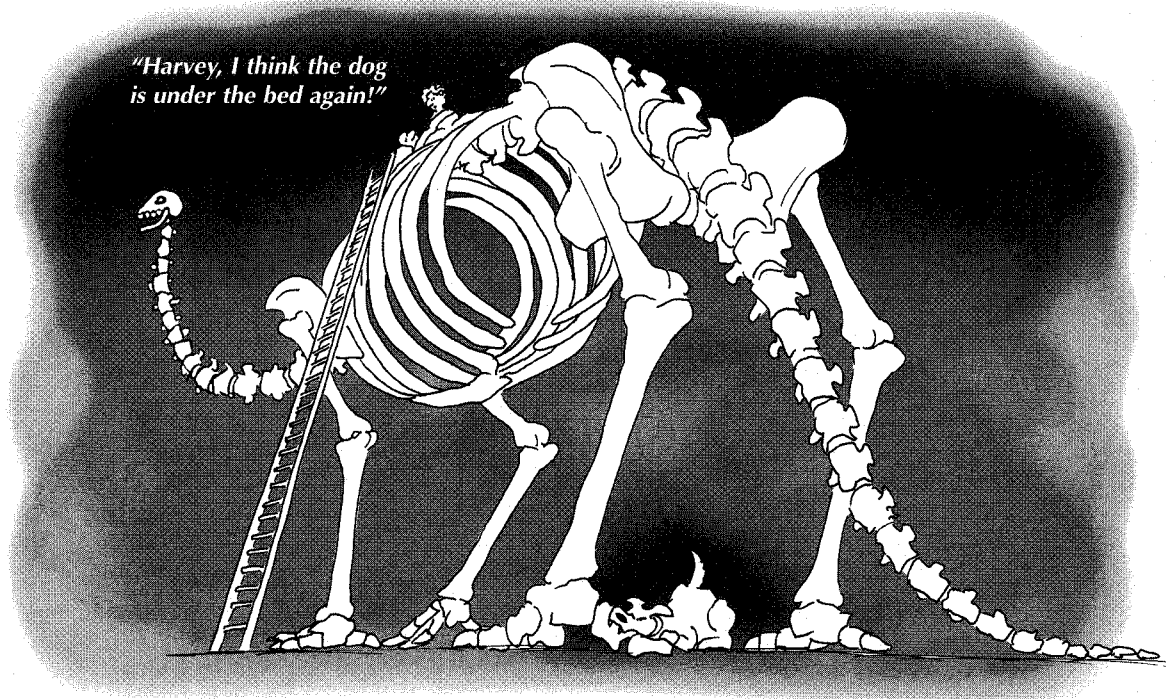
A word on his credentials: His array of groundbreaking books, beginning with seminal studies of the founding of the federal government and including a study of early American economic and political thought, would have amply justified his becoming president of one or all of the leading establishment historical associations and winning every prize in sight. (Do yourself a favor and at least read his illuminating *The American Presidency: An Intellectual History* [1994].) That he has not received the honors he has earned illustrates the extent to which the profession wallows in neo-McCarthyism, systematically ignoring conservative historians when it does not slander them. McDonald is conservative, but he cannot be pigeonholed. A bold, independent thinker, he demolishes the shibboleths of the right as readily as those of the left. In *States' Rights and the Union* he provides an indispensable history, replete with wise assessments, that may serve as a starting point for those, whether left or right, who eschew soapbox oratory and wish to form sound judgments on an intractable issue that has been central to American political experience and is destined to remain with us.

Because destined to remain with us it most certainly is, as the miseries that afflicted the Republican coalition of the Reagan-Bush years made clear. From the beginning only the prestige and political skill of Ronald Reagan papered over the ideological gulf that separated the many factions and tendencies of his coalition. The fault line in what under less able leadership would have been an unstable alliance ran deep. On the one side stood bold free-marketeers and libertarians—

classic nineteenth-century liberals who continue to display their sense of humor by describing themselves as conservatives. On the other side stood traditional conservatives, who have always distrusted the market and who enlist their passions on questions of public morality and social policy. On the one side stood people with a rosy view of human nature that has become indistinguishable from the rosy view of the left in its celebration of the beauties of "human liberation." On the other side stood people who, if they do not necessarily uphold the doctrine of original sin, see humanity as sin-prone and regard the cry for "liberation" as an irresistible invitation to unleash the darker side of human nature. The one side thinks that everything, including religion and morals, should be a matter of consumer choice; the other side insists on the maintenance of firm moral standards. Here, however, we focus on the implications for federal-state relations. The traditionalists wanted the federal government stripped down to what they considered its bare essentials, with power returned to states and localities, but those who prevailed had another idea. Put baldly, it came to this: Are you crazy? We finally have the federal government under our control; good sense dictates that we use its power to advance our program. And it might have worked, had the Reaganites been able to put together a coherent program.

The amusing spectacle of the recent presidential vote in Florida should remind us of the persistence of the federal-state dichotomy. There was, after all, something delicious in hearing Al Gore's entourage and the left-wing justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, who normally do not even try to hide their enthusiasm for federal centralization, suddenly announce their dedication to states' rights, while the Republicans, who only recently converted to the doctrine, suddenly reverted to their historical commitment to federal power. Instead of leveling charges of inconsistency or, worse, hypocrisy, we would do better to reflect on the enduring tension among people in both camps who, in their more sober moments, recognize that the real quarrel concerns the proper balance between just claims.

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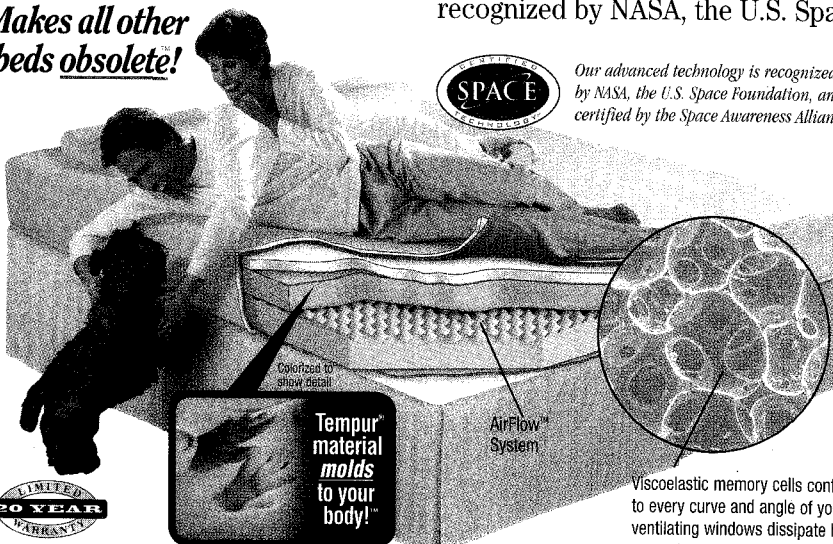
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The doctrine of states' rights has long been confused with separate issues—strong versus weak or unobtrusive government, and the relation of judicial to executive and legislative power. McDonald skillfully guides us through these problems, which the Florida fiasco again brought to the surface. For better or worse, John Marshall and his successors on the Supreme Court established the principle of judicial review, and the country has accepted it with surprisingly little resistance. Even so, the Court had to proceed slowly in the face of political resistance, and not until the Dred Scott decision did it forcefully reassert Marshall's doctrine. But it has gone largely unnoticed that the application of judicial review at the federal level did not imply its application at the state level. Before the Civil War the South, for example, had many distinguished opponents of federal judicial review who nonetheless championed the principle within the states. Conversely, as McDonald records, opposition to the principle resulted in the Confederacy's never establishing a Supreme Court. (Little in the recent events in Florida was more ludicrous than the pretense that the state supreme court could simply assert ultimate jurisdiction over a matter that the state legislature plausibly claimed for itself.)

As for the mistaken notion that the doctrine of states' rights implies weak or unobtrusive government, McDonald disposes of the confusion in a masterly fashion by demonstrating that from the earliest days of the Republic the most important advocates of states' rights supported strong, active state government. America's first great advocates of "diversity," they opposed the centralization of power in Washington—which tended to result in homogenization. They insisted that within the limits imposed by considerations of national safety, the people of the several states ought to exercise power in accordance with their particular experience, needs, and sensibilities. As such, advocates of states' rights usually constituted the party of democratic resistance to the pretenses of a federal government that more often than not served the interests of entrenched economic power. In tracing the ascendancy of the states'-rights forces before the Civil War,

McDonald shreds the "myth" of *laissez-faire* by citing the vigorous measures taken by the states to promote economic development and in some cases, most notably Pennsylvania, to protect working people and consumers from corporate exploitation. Chief Justice Roger Taney is remembered primarily for the infamous Dred Scott decision, but he nonetheless ranked as a progressive and a strong advocate of state-sponsored economic development. When, like many Jacksonian Democrats, Taney advanced the cause of states' rights, he believed, with good reason, that he was enhancing the power of the people of the states to provide for their own well-being.

Conservative McDonald may be, but this conservatism falls more in the mold of Alexander Hamilton than in that of John C. Calhoun, whom he treats with less respect than that great if problematic figure deserves. McDonald's tough mind does not always accord with his heart, which, though by no means soft, sympathizes with those who yearn for the "near and familiar" and suspect "the remote and abstract." Thus although he betrays considerable sympathy for people who bear the brunt of centralized policies that affect classes and regions unequally, as a well-grounded student of economic history, he regards Hamilton's program of national economic intervention as an attempt to do what had to be done if America was to realize its promise of becoming a great power. Indeed, William Henry Trescot, of South Carolina, America's first great diplomatic historian, whom McDonald regrettably does not mention, warned his fellow secessionists as early as 1850 that Calhoun's doctrine of states' rights made no sense in a world of competing nation-states. The South's problem, Trescot insisted, was not that the federal government had too much power but that that power was in the hands of the South's enemies. He had no doubt that an independent Confederacy, if it intended to survive, would have to swallow a heavy dose of political centralization.

McDonald wrestles with this conundrum in a concise and compelling account of political developments from the Revolution through Reconstruction

which is marred only by a few trivial factual errors. He writes that when in power, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe, all promoters of states' rights, strove to reduce the federal government but ended by defending and strengthening its power in essential respects. Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase looked extra-constitutional to almost everyone, including Jefferson, but most agreed that it was necessary for the protection of vital national interests and to remove the threat posed by Napoleon's ambitions in the Americas. Establishment of the Bank of the United States, federal promotion of internal improvements, and implementation of a protective tariff could all be defended as sound economic policy, but their constitutionality was by no means clear. Jefferson's embargo, an effort to keep the United States out of war, sealed American shipping off from the transatlantic trade and threatened economic ruin for New England, which raised the banner of states' rights against it. Time and again, despite howls from radical states'-rights advocates, Presidents committed to states' rights have found it necessary to enhance federal power. And no, we cannot shrug off the actions of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe, not to mention the young Calhoun, as manifestations of bad faith by men who opposed federal power only when they could not control it. They had to face exigencies for which their theory and experience had not prepared them. They did their best to accommodate the perceived national interest while upholding states' rights as far as they thought safe.

In an especially noteworthy discussion McDonald properly characterizes Andrew Jackson as a champion of states' rights, recalling Jackson's defiant support for state-directed Indian removal, his qualms over tariffs, his veto of the Maysville Road Bill (which was designed to promote federally sponsored internal improvements), and his destruction of the Bank of the United States. Indeed, on more than one occasion Jackson spoke of "state sovereignty," thereby appearing to advocate the most extreme version of states' rights. Calhoun and the South Carolina nullifiers, whom Jackson threatened to hang for treason, demand-

ed to know how his support for Georgia's defiance of the Supreme Court's pro-Indian directives differed from their own assertion of a state's right to nullify a federal law and interpret the Constitution for itself. The consequences of Jackson's course did not always prove attractive, and McDonald unsparingly hammers his banking policy in particular as economic madness. Yet "the legacy of Andrew Jackson was a mixed bag." His commitment had a firm limit: like Lincoln after him, he would not abide nullification, secession, or any action that threatened to sever the Union. Hence he stands as one of the foremost architects of American national consolidation. Whatever his intentions, by declaring nullification and secession beyond the pale and making the Union sacrosanct, he inadvertently stripped the states of constitutional means to enforce rights he acknowledged as theirs.

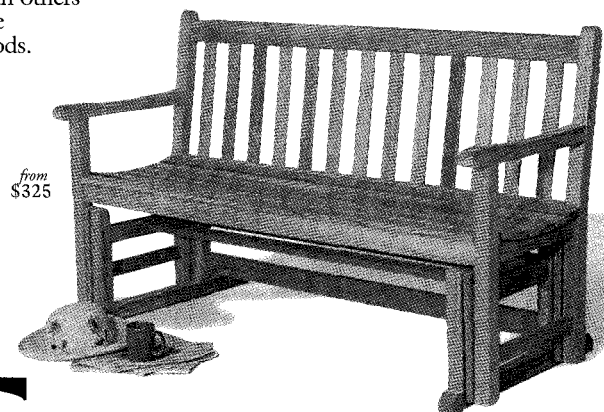
One of the more important contributions of *States' Rights and the Union* lies in its demonstration that the advocates of concentrated federal power have often shamelessly invoked the doctrine of states' rights to promote immediate political objectives. McDonald reminds us that the New England Federalists posed a secessionist threat in their opposition to the embargo and the War of 1812, and that the northern antislavery forces invoked states' rights in their promulgation of "personal liberty laws" designed to protect runaway slaves. Wishing to be evenhanded, he also accuses the southerners of an opportunistic abandonment of states' rights to secure the Fugitive Slave Act and to demand federal protection of slavery in the territories. Here I find his judgment questionable. Since proslavery strict-constructionists did not deny the power of the federal government within its appropriate sphere, they appealed directly to the Constitution, which had assigned such power to it.

The struggle for the western territories raised a question that McDonald bypasses. Southerners had always claimed that the slave states would not have ratified the Constitution in the first place had they not been assured of federal respect for their rights as slave-

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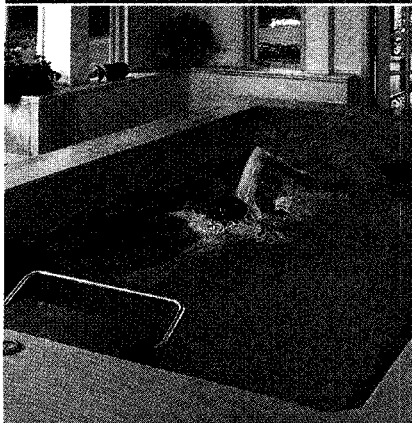


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holders. They reasonably denounced the attempt to block slaveholding in the territories as a repudiation of what had been understood as a tacit compact among different states with different social systems—a contemporary version of the twentieth-century doctrine of “peaceful coexistence” between capitalist and communist states.

McDonald's admirable account of the vicissitudes of the struggle over states' rights from the early Republic onward touches on a related matter. The doctrine of states' rights always had an army of northern supporters. Indeed, McDonald notes that the most radical of the antislavery governors invoked it against Lincoln's policies, which they viewed as too timid. Yet over time states' rights came to be seen, however inaccurately, as a peculiarly southern doctrine—plausibly so, because it increasingly be-

and makes just claims, it has evolved within increasingly narrow limits.

A review of the even broader application of the Bill of Rights to the states illuminates that narrowing of limits. The Bill of Rights forbade Congress from imposing an established church, but it did not forbid the states from doing so. The disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Virginia and of the Congregational Church in Massachusetts occurred later than the passage of the Bill of Rights and entirely under state auspices. For that matter, Thomas Jefferson and others who opposed the Alien and Sedition Acts did not question the power of the states to curtail civil liberties. Indeed, North Carolina, to cite one outstanding example, long barred Catholics and Jews from holding state offices. Libertarian interpretations of the Bill of Rights are of recent and dubious origin, and, more

Time and again, despite howls from radical states' rights advocates, Presidents committed to states' rights have found it necessary to enhance federal power.

came reigning doctrine in the South while being hotly contested in the North. McDonald, in an impatient dismissal of the romantic southern-conservative notion that slavery did not lie at the heart of the sectional conflict, discusses the underlying problem only in passing and in much too gingerly a fashion. The doctrine of states' rights did not originate in the South as a self-serving defense of slavery, but it did thrive there and display a force well beyond that which could be sustained in the North. Slavery, understood as a social system, established powerful tendencies toward local rule, in contradistinction to the centralizing demands created by the capitalist social system of the North. A strong capitalist system embedded in a world system of rival states requires a high level of political centralization for reasons of national security. No less does it require considerable centralization to regulate internal competition, bring order to banking and commercial policies, and protect those exposed to corporate exploitation. Hence, although the doctrine of states' rights retains significant force

to the point, the people have rarely had an opportunity to express their views. Since the Fourteenth Amendment is now taken as having federalized the Bill of Rights and imposed it upon the states, the issue appears settled. But the Fourteenth Amendment was promulgated in a flagrantly unconstitutional way that in effect allotted the spoils of the Civil War to the winners. The Civil War, liberals joyfully announce, settled the constitutional questions. Indeed so. But no fig leaf of pretended constitutionality can disguise what was a revolutionary act. To put it another way, a more telling illustration of the principle that might makes right can hardly be imagined.

McDonald's epilogue, “The Doctrine Transformed,” sheds light on the development of that narrowing of limits. It provides an overview of events from 1876 to the present which, among its other virtues, discusses the importance of states' rights in the struggle to curb corporate power and to initiate many of the social and economic reforms for which the left, especially, has fought. In exploring these complexities McDonald places

us on guard against the latest spins. Today we hear much about a "new federalism" and the federal government's cession of much power to the states, which supposedly restores power to the people. But more often than not the cession creates a mirage and is no better than a bureaucratic convenience. For although the states may assume authority over welfare or certain facets of education, the policy "guidelines" come from above. In practice, that means imposition of a homogenized national policy, which the states must finance and administer. The "people" have no more power to formulate policies appropriate to their local conditions than they had before, although the charade may well bring issues closer to home and encourage the people to find ways to express their will.

The argument McDonald drives home in his epilogue highlights the theme of the book: The claims of the federal government and the claims of the states have resulted in a tension, sometimes creative and sometimes not, the specifics of which undergo constant reassessment and shifts in balance. A shift toward states' rights has been discernible in recent decades, but within limits much narrower than those advocated by Jefferson and Jackson, not to mention Calhoun. Our Republic arose and has thrived in a constant struggle to effect the most efficacious balance. We would therefore do well to end the petulant, not to say demagogic, categorization of the rival viewpoints as "progressive" or "socialist" and "racist" or "reactionary." Throughout the history of the United States the contending political forces—Federalists and anti-Federalists, Whigs and Democrats, free-soilers and slaveholders, liberals and conservatives—have agreed on the principle of the sovereignty of the people. They have quarreled over the best means for allowing the people, however defined, to express their will, and this has often translated into a quarrel over which level of government best encapsulates that will. Since there is no definite answer to that question, we must live with considerable tension. We need at least to separate the real issue from the spurious—and to do so, we can best begin by reading this outstanding book. ▀

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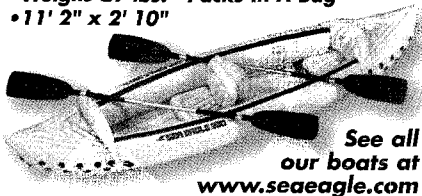
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In her ninth novel Pat Barker, who searingly depicted World War I and its psychological casualties in the *Regeneration* trilogy, again explores the uses—and the illusions—of professional detachment along with the question of whether the rational can cope with the ugliest of realities. Much as she sculpted her trenches with bones sticking out of the mud and corpses propping up walls, in *Border Crossing* she evokes the smoke, the staleness, and the insecurity of probation offices and remand centers. As the protagonist, Tom Seymour, a psychiatrist, teases out the history of his patient Danny (or is Danny doing all the teasing?), Barker creates a sense of menace worthy of Ian McEwan.

Barker has far more faith in drama and image than in assertion. The reader is grateful whenever she offers any alleviating comedy. When Tom visits Danny's old writing teacher, he is forced to attend a mortifying literary evening: "Expecting a literary lion (male), obliged to make do with one small tabby cat (female), the groupies sank deeper into the sofa, a single, disgruntled heap." One character in *Regeneration* says with a laugh, "You want perception, you go to a novelist, not a psychiatrist." *Border Crossing* is replete with sharp, expressive exchanges, hard poetry, and as many enigmas as im- placable truths. —KERRY FRIED



BORDER CROSSING
 by Pat Barker
 Farrar, Straus and
 Giroux, 224 pages,
 \$24.00

In this miniature portrait of a marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Ransome are forced to face the emptiness of their well-established lives when they return from the opera to find that all their furnishings, right down to the "lavatory brush," have been stolen. Sheltered Mrs. Ransome feels liberated to be suddenly relieved of the "paraphernalia"—cake stands and fish forks and

guest towels—that "they had transported ... with them across thirty-two years of marriage to no purpose at all," and she discovers the delights of Indian grocery stores, bean-bag chairs, and TV. Mr. Ransome, unresilient and exacting, can't bend so easily to welcome the accoutrements of modern Britain. The playwright Alan Bennett's attention to concrete detail, and his depiction of contemporary life through Mrs. Ransome's unworldly eyes, make his scenes hilarious, but his vision, in which an empty marriage is replaced by talk-show sentiment, is hard. Bennett's wry take on long-enduring marriage and his satiric juxtaposition of society old and new, conservative and liberal, is a sweet tanged with moral judgment. —CHRISTINA SCHWARZ



THE CLOTHES THEY STOOD UP IN

by Alan Bennett
 Random House,
 176 pages, \$14.95

I read this book through a six-hour delay at LaGuardia followed by a transcontinental flight, and as my plane made its descent into San Francisco, I wished I were continuing to Hawaii. A longtime Democratic congressman from Boston, speaker of the House during the Carter and the Reagan years, Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill (1912-1994), on John Farrell's prodigious showing, was among the great public men of the postwar era. He was easily the most beloved: "O'Neill's heart matched his bulk" (which could swell to 300 pounds). Meeting with reporters early in 1981, when Reagan aides were casting him as big government made flesh, he spoke emotionally of having slipped \$45 million into the budget to raise the height of dwarfs and \$12 million for turned-in ankles. "I remember putting in eighteen million dollars for knock-knees," he said, to guffaws. "There are a hundred and fifty thousand dwarfs in America. Does anyone have an obligation? Is it the ob-

ligation of the federal government? I think it is." House Democrats loved him as much for the toughness revealed in that comment as for his liberalism. Appealing to their loyalty, he led them into a historic confrontation with Ronald Reagan that, Farrell argues, saved the programs of the New Deal and the Great Society (and that provides Farrell with the drama of speaker and President facing off). The aura of office did not stay O'Neill's tongue. "Don't give me that crap," he snapped after Reagan complained about loafers on welfare. "The guy in Youngstown, Ohio, who's been laid off at the steel mill and has to make his mortgage payments—don't tell me he doesn't want to work." It hurt him that the Democrats, whose programs had helped to create the middle class, had lost the vote of the guy in Youngstown. (Last year George W. Bush carried white men earning less than \$75,000 by 23



TIP O'NEILL AND THE DEMOCRATIC CENTURY
by John A. Farrell
Little, Brown,
784 pages, \$29.95

points.) The success of the Democrats, O'Neill thought, had made America safe for the Republicans. Success? Failure, more like: the Democrats program-matically abandoned the Youngstown steel worker in the 1970s, just as his real wages began an almost thirty-year decline. Starting in the 1980s—and, tragically, with O'Neill's blessing—congressional Democrats used their incumbency to pry campaign-finance money out of corporations, to whom they then became beholden, and whose interests clashed with those of working families. The party forgot, as O'Neill said of Reagan's advisers, "from where [it has] come," losing its heart to a cash register. —JACK BEATTY

Those who found the *succès fou* of Helen Fielding's Bridget Jones books too *fou* for their taste may yet appreciate *Cause Celeb*. This novel is not just for the Melissa Bank set but will also satisfy those who have graduated to Diane Johnson and Francine Prose. How ironic, then, that Fielding wrote *Cause Celeb* before *Bridget Jones's Diary*, and published it, in 1994, in Britain



CAUSE CELEB
by Helen Fielding
Viking, 352 pages,
\$24.95

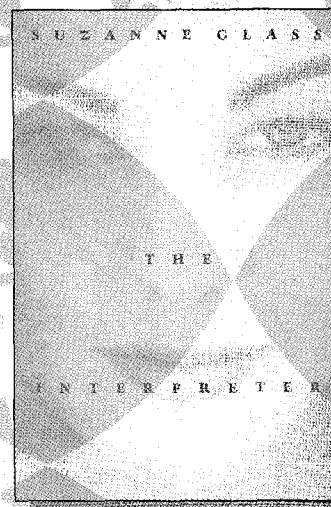
(although it is only now coming out in the United States, the book has sold more than half a million copies in the UK and Europe). Bridget Jones's many fans will recognize a prototype of their heroine in *Cause Celeb*'s narrator and protagonist, Rosie Richardson. Rosie quickly tires of self-absorption and neurotic romance with a glamorous Londoner, and throws herself into famine relief in Africa. She is not so naive, however, as to try to escape her past, and ultimately the two strands of the tale become one. Rosie displays a keen sense of humor whether she is rubbing shoulders with show-biz personalities or muddling along in the refugee camp—and isn't humor exactly the quality that would enable a person to get through either situation more or less sane? Don't worry: *Cause Celeb* doesn't play famine relief for laughs—or fawn over fashionable people who do their bit to help. This is a deft, subtle, admirable, pleasurable book. —BARBARA WALLRAFF

Sometimes an impressionistic memoir after the death of a literary figure can be definitive. The precision of a friend's intimate memory furnishes a connection to the senses, a stimulus to intuitive understanding, that a sedulous biographical assembly of documentary facts cannot match. In *Familiar Spirits*, Alison Lurie has written a revealing, happily far from objective tribute to and critique of the relationship between James Merrill and his life-and-literary partner, David Jackson. It conveys the bitter flavor of lives tried and failed. It rivals the pungency and impact of Lurie's lovely early work, *V. R. Lang: A Memoir*, which was published forty years ago under a subsidy by, yes, James Merrill and David Jackson.

Merrill and Jackson became lovers and partners in 1954 and shared financially well-endowed lives in Stonington, Connecticut, Athens, and Key West for all the years till Merrill's death (from AIDS), in 1995. Lurie contends (and I find her evidence highly persuasive)

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**FAMILIAR SPIRITS:
A MEMOIR OF
JAMES MERRILL
AND DAVID
JACKSON**

by Alison Lurie
Viking,
192 pages, \$22.95

that Merrill's verse epic of encounters on the Ouija board, *The Changing Light at Sandover*, not only rose out of the intimate experiences of both men but also referred, unconsciously, to the uneasy and deteriorating relations between them. Merrill, "a ringmaster of language," had emerged early into a dazzling literary career; Jackson, a frustrated novelist, never achieved either publication or fame. Lurie's thesis holds that their years of Ouija-board probing dredged up the darkest in each man and left their relationship as drained of life as the hapless beached sea creature at the end of *La Dolce Vita*. The story she unfolds may illuminate the paired personalities of the two men more boldly than it does the scrambled pages of *The Changing Light at Sandover*, but it is written with the poignancy of long affection, and it left this reader jolted and distressed. —PETER DAVISON

The former baseball commissioner Bowie Kuhn once said that Jim Bouton's baseball diary, *Ball Four*, had "done the game a grave disservice." First published six years after Bouton's pitching won two games in the 1964 World Series, the book tipped over a lot of sacred cows. For instance, Bouton wrote that Mickey Mantle once hit a home run while hung over, that he regularly led his teammates on voyeuristic expeditions, and—perhaps most injurious to Mantle's later livelihood—that many Mantle-autographed baseballs really represented the penmanship of a Yankee clubhouse factotum. But, characteristically, Bouton also let the Mick's sense of humor shine.

"Mick, how does your leg feel?" Bouton would ask Mantle on the field, making fun of their manager's vigilance against malingeringers. "Well," Mantle would an-



**BALL FOUR:
THE FINAL PITCH**
by Jim Bouton
Sports Publishing,
544 pages, \$24.95

swer, "it's severed at the knee." "Yes," Bouton would say, "but does it hurt?" Whether *Ball Four* robbed America of its heroes or in fact helped to emancipate exploited players from their former indentured servitude (as Bouton is not alone in suggesting), it's easy to overlook how funny and well-written a book it is. The last line reverberates as only the best codas do: "You see, you spend a good piece of your life gripping a baseball and in the end it turns out that it was the other way around all the time." (In retrospect, that sentence could probably stand to lose a couple of the words cluttering it up, but only an ingrate criticizes a no-hitter for not being a perfect game.)

Readers return to a beloved volume after thirty years with some trepidation, especially when the author keeps reissuing it every ten years with additional epilogues (however graceful). The welcome revelation in this latest reissue isn't just how beautifully Bouton's account of a season he spent with the Astros and the short-lived Seattle Pilots holds up. It is also how familiar good sentences still sound, even if you last read them when paperbacks all had green edges. No wonder the New York Public Library in 1995 anointed *Ball Four* one of its "Books of the Century"—the only sports book so honored. If the literary detective Don Foster is right, and the books we read early imprint themselves on our writing styles for life, here's betting there are a lot of middle-aged writers out there with at least a fragment of Bouton's DNA in their prose. They could do a lot worse. So could anybody looking for a gift to hook a baseball-mad kid on reading. Jim Bouton was that baseball-mad kid once, and despite a lot of road miles and some serious heartbreak, he pretty much still is. He'd make an excellent commissioner of baseball. —DAVID KIPEN

Literary paeans to the English countryside come a dime a dozen. What makes J. L. Carr's 1980 novel *A Month in the Country* different, worthy of inclusion in the select and pleasantly quirky group of New York Review Books Classics reprints, is not mere lyrical beauty but a rare generosity of vision

and an ever alert sense of the absurd.

Carr, who died in 1994, at the age of eighty-two, took an off-center approach to what might seem a simple and straightforward tale. It is 1920—"another world." Tom Birkin, a shell-shocked veteran of the Great War, comes to the Yorkshire village of Oxgodby to restore a magnificent fourteenth-century fresco that has for hundreds of years been concealed beneath layers of paint and whitewash. The ripening summer, the slow but steady unveiling of the hidden masterpiece, Birkin's growing involvement with the villagers and their unremarkable doings, a nascent love and its almost immediate loss, all perform a transform-



**A MONTH IN
THE COUNTRY**
by J. L. Carr, with
an introduction by
Michael Holroyd

New York
Review Books,
135 pages, \$12.95

ative magic on him and equip him, in the end, for a return to his world and a renewed engagement with it. A native of the region he wrote about, Carr evoked the village with uncanny intimacy. One of the novel's great achievements is its communication of the timelessness of rural life: the faintly ridiculous, deeply kind country people are recognizable avatars of the medieval churchgoers who gazed at Birkin's fresco and of their Stone Age ancestors. Arbitrarily imposed on an ancient way of life, Christianity is now, having outlived its time and its truth, just as arbitrarily fading away again; the festivals of the Church, as Oxgodby's depressed vicar is only too aware, are "no more than a pagan salute to the passing seasons," and the tragic events of the war have made them ever more irrelevant. Carr's picture of modern life encroaching on the age-old countryside owes something to Thomas Hardy, but his vision is more hopeful and forgiving. Intimations of modernity, he implies, do not threaten ancient patterns so much as offer the continuation of them under different guises, and *A Month in the Country*, for all its sadness, turns out to be a story of spiritual regeneration, even of resurrection. —BROOKE ALLEN

TELEVISION
**THE FEEL-GOOD
 PRESIDENCY**

*The pseudo-politics
 of The West Wing*

BY CHRIS LEHMANN



In the heat of Campaign 2000, NBC's publicity department began an ad campaign trumpeting its own version of "a president we can all agree on." The man in question, of course, was Josiah Bartlet, the embattled chief executive played by Martin Sheen in the network's runaway nighttime-serial hit, *The West Wing*. At about the same time, cars in southern California reportedly began sporting bumper stickers that read BARTLET FOR PRESIDENT. When the Democratic National Committee scheduled a party on the set of the show, in Los Angeles, during the Democratic Convention, more than a few wags commented that the Democrats would be far better off with the charismatic, principled chief executive that television had produced to wide popular acclaim than with the unpersuasive populist crusader who was sopping up bucketloads of Hollywood's political largesse, to dangerously mounting popular indifference.

It's tempting, of course, to write off such goofy talk—much of it the handiwork of publicists—to our pop culture's always dubious engagement with reality. After all, hadn't there been speculation earlier, in the heady, celebrity-ridden primary season, about presidential runs by Warren Beatty and Cybill Shepherd? Isn't it but a turn of the screw to propose an entirely fictional character as a suitable leader of the world's only superpower—much as Pat Paulsen mounted

his successive satirical campaigns, and Robert Altman filmed a cult mockumentary around the imaginary candidate Jack Tanner?

But the problem here is that the notion of a Bartlet presidency struck—and continues to strike—many influential observers as a perfectly sound idea. Countless devotees of the show, both in TV journalism and on its many reverent, unofficial fan Web sites, regard the weekly doings on *The West Wing* as anything but satire. The clear critical verdict is that this Wednesday-evening set piece of frenetic Oval Office intrigue presents a far more edifying vision of America's political soul than anything that has wafted out of the Grand Guignol of our scandal-addled, impeachment-scarred, ballot-challenged national government.

In any event, the mere persistence—indeed, the continued, mammoth popularity—of the show signals a curious sort of social contract, ratifying and institutionalizing one of the striking themes of America's post-1960s civitas: the selective (yet ever didactic) liberal retreat into political fantasy. After all, it had long occurred to the show's legions of fans that a Bush victory could revoke a good part of its earnest purchase on topicality. And one leitmotif of press accounts of *The West Wing* over the protracted election of 2000 was to broach the question of how the show—which over its first two seasons has played as a sort of higher-minded, conscience-haunted

upgrade of the Clinton White House—might change in the event of a Bush victory. The consensus, as the show's creator and chief writer, Aaron Sorkin, announced, was that no such reality-based revisions would be required: a Bush victory "hasn't played in my mind at all," he said in a lavish cover story on the show in the November *George*. Come December, however, Sorkin did confess to Michael Wolff, in *New York* magazine, that the show couldn't help benefiting from the unsightly overall condition of America's democratic experiment: the time, he said, "is just right for the cavalry to come riding in."

This pair of remarks captures the curious cognitive balancing act *The West Wing* has introduced into our popular culture. On the one hand, it claims no ambitions any grander than those of any other television show—to divert and entertain viewers and (usually in special holiday episodes) to produce agreeably broad and radiant installments in the nation's continuing sentimental education. But on the other hand, it has an overt agenda so breathtaking in its sweep that "ambitious" hardly begins to sum it up: *The West Wing* sets out, week after week, to restore public faith in the institutions of our government, to shore up the bulwarks of American patriotism, and to supply a vision of executive liberalism—at once principled and pragmatic; mandating both estimable political vision and serious personal sacrifice;

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID SMALL

plying an understanding of the nation's common good that is heroically heedless of focus groups, opposition research, small-bore compromise, and re-election prospects—that exists nowhere else in our recent history.

How, exactly, has this come to be? On the most obvious level *The West Wing* appeals to liberal viewers as an exercise in wish-fulfillment fantasy, pointing a way out of their post-Clinton predicament. Indeed, the most common theme in the many celebrations of the show's political virtues has been that it gives us a version of Clintonism with both moral gravitas and political backbone, while editing out the more risible parts of the Clinton legacy—an act, commentators say, of “empathy” unthinkable in the normal rounds of political reporting. The former White House aide Matthew Miller wrote in a wide-eyed appreciation of the show in *Brill's Content* last spring, “By the seemingly innocuous act of portraying politicians with empathy, *The West Wing* has injected into the culture a subversive competitor to the reigning values of political journalism”—which Miller views as rife with “cynicism.” This bold subversion turns the weekly melodrama, by Miller's lights, into a sort of pluperfect documentary, redeeming a hopelessly fallen political culture by sheer force of its “humanizing instinct.”

It's true that the show eagerly displays its own stirringly “human” themes on its sleeve—as is the case in the nighttime-TV “workplace” serials about hospitals, law firms, and police investigative units on which *The West Wing* is clearly modeled. But since its subject is the nation's politics (and its tacit mission is to revive sagging liberal spirits), *The West Wing* steers wide of the thorny moral conflicts that turn up in those life-or-death TV venues, in which petty personal agendas kick up disasters and catastrophes galore. Instead it offers a pointedly sunny weekly fable about the unassailable motives and all-too-human foibles of the nation's governing class which verges on the Capra-esque.

Reportedly, Sorkin—who developed the show out of material left over from his screenplay for the Rob Reiner fea-

ture film *The American President*—had not intended the President to be a central character on *The West Wing*. But here as in American political life, the President has swollen over time to soak up most of the dramatic interest, even though the formulas that Sorkin favors (previously his most celebrated writing credit was the military-courtroom drama *A Few Good Men*) make Bartlet a two-dimensional glyph of implausible virtue. He is charismatic and quietly omniscient, à la Bill Clinton, but viewers are forcefully reminded that he does not share Clinton's (or John F. Kennedy's) priapic weaknesses.

But all this tight moral choreography comes up considerably short of serving as a prescription for even a convincing imaginary liberal revival. In fact, sustained exposure to the logic of the show's plot conventions, the jittery policy patter of its characters, and (perhaps most of all) its sonorous faux nobility inspires a singular distrust. In particular, the way the show strives to dramatize the earnest inner torments of what Christopher Lasch called “the caring class” produces a civic emptiness far hollower than that resounding through either of our major parties.

The show's obsession with feeling also clearly impels its choice of subject matter. The Bartlet Administration's key internal conflicts and legislative rallying cries oscillate mainly within the narrow register of lifestyle liberalism, the stealth ideology that fuels Hollywood as it did the Clinton presidency. The heroic outbursts from *The West Wing*'s lead characters are almost always directed at the forces of cultural reaction gathering in the heartland: the religious right, anti-gay moralists, creationists, advocates of anti-abortion terror, tough-on-crime yahoos, and shrill defenders of the Second Amendment. Bartlet himself has been a collateral victim of a white supremacist's assassination attempt on his black aide, Charlie Young (Dulé Hill). His White House dotes on hate-crimes legislation and also longs, bizarrely, for a high-profile showdown with the religious right over the currently moot constitutional question of school prayer. These symbolic posturings can only spring from the Ad-

ministration's sense of itself as a missionary outpost in a hostile and benighted culture.

Of course, many of *The West Wing*'s concerns belong on the public agenda, and occasionally they address real threats to civil liberties and social peace. But the dramatically declining membership rolls of the Christian Coalition and the results of polls tracking public opinion on the religious right's pet issues reveal that the specter of a theocratic seizure of the state, rhetorically exaggerated even at the height of the religious right's power, is a rapidly dimming mirage.

Nevertheless, Team Bartlet is constantly consumed by the minutiae of high cultural warfare. Examples are legion, and multiply weekly. In a second-season episode, “The Midterms,” there's a high-handed showdown between Bartlet and one Dr. Jenna Jacobs—a moralizing radio talk-show host clearly modeled on Dr. Laura Schlessinger—at a White House reception for various radio eminences. Quizzing her on the biblical injunction against homosexuality as “an abomination,” Bartlet takes her on a rapid-fire declamatory tour of the follies of biblical literalism, a punishing performance whose like has not been seen since the climax of *Inherit the Wind*: “I'm interested in selling my youngest daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7 ... what would a good price be?” Now, not only is this stacking the rhetorical deck heavily in Bartlet's favor (even Dr. Laura, bigoted though she can be, does not rest her castigation of homosexuality entirely on biblical literalism). It also provokes a rather enormous question: Why is Bartlet expending such heavy artillery and so much precious time on humiliating a radio talk-show host? And why is he unable to resist a final victory dance over her seated person and prostrated intellect—especially by invoking the majesty of his own presidential eminence over the discredited authority of biblical tradition? (“One last thing,” he shouts. “While you may be mistaking this for your monthly meeting of the Ignorant Tight-Ass Club, in this building when the President stands, nobody sits.”) The answer, of course, is that such displays—which occur nearly every week in Bartlet's White House—cost the

Administration precisely nothing politically while ratcheting up its sense of cultural superiority exponentially.

The West Wing, in other words, plies a resolutely insular, therapeutic vision of presidential politics, one that often renders policymaking indistinguishable from the conduct of an encounter group. Indeed, in the thickets of controversy that crop up in the Bartlet Administration, the strongest objection to a policy or a decision to overstep protocol is usually that it doesn't feel right. And when the members of Team Bartlet chart a new policy course, it is because they agree that it suits the perceived national mood or because it springs (in the grand tradition of TV serials) from a profound personal experience. If one of the sixties' most enduring—if dubious—notions is that the personal is political, *The West Wing* operates from the converse: the political is, above all, personal. In perhaps the most decisive, melodramatic installment of the show—a late-first-season entry called "Let Bartlet Be Bartlet"—the President announces his determination to secure two key reform-minded appointees to the Federal Election Commission. His rationale has little to do with the current political playing field, or even with the prospects for meaningful reform, but turns, rather, on his plaintive appeal to his chief of staff, Leo McGarry (John Spencer): "I don't want to feel like this anymore."

Amid such high drama it requires a considerable effort of the will to recall that liberals belong to the strain of American political debate that has traditionally prided itself on skepticism about how matters of state power get minted into brute personal agendas. To put things another way, it's hard to imagine any of the show's champions or scriptwriters evincing much concern over, say, Richard Nixon's many funks on the job—let alone endorsing them as a sound basis for executive policymaking. But in furnishing its imaginary, cultural platform for the revival of liberal politics in America, *The West Wing* has also slipped into an uncritical cult of personality—much as the adoration of Bill Clinton has in the real-life house of liberalism. In so doing, *The West Wing* reminds

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ANSWERS TO THE FEBRUARY PUZZLER

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"Sweet Sixteen"

The diagram represents "A box of chocolates." Across. 1. C + RAVING; TENT + H 9. (1)AWFULLY; B(R)ASS 10. SPIN (rev.); RO(SET)TES 11. C(A)'S + SO + WARY; SPA(r) 12. IN + TONER; S + A + TIN 13. A + R + RAY; P(AN + ACE)A 14. D + RIP; MONITORS (anag.) 15. STAPH (homophone); SEDATES (hidden) Down. 1. C + EASE; CI(CAD)'S 2. A(TFIR) + ST (riff rev.); ERICA (anag.) 3. V + AUNT; SOD + A POP 4. NYLO + N (only anag.); WE + A(PO)NS 5. GUYS (homophone); PAR + LANCE 6. EAR + THY; A(CAT)HA 7. NEA TEST; S(COT)T 8. H(IS)S; CAN(VASE)S Sweet Sixteen. A. T(R)EE'S B. C(RE)ON C. WA(T)ER (wear anag.) D. PERCH (double def.) E. EX(I)ST (Tex's anag.) F. CARAT (homophone) G. F(R)ONT H. LO(N)GS I. L + I + BY + A J. CHEEP (homophone) K. C + HIDE L. O + PER + A M. AB(O)UT N. LIVES (anag.) O. MONTH (hidden) P. CAN + D(r)Y

us, down to the smallest details of character and plot resolution, of the very forces that have hollowed out the American liberal faith. In lieu of the majority-forging certainties of the New Deal, the Fair Deal, and the Great Society (and their campaigns against “economic royalists,” “isolationists,” segregationists, and the like) we find anxious self-examination, second-guessing of the news cycle, and protracted agonizing over the appearance of scandal and conflicts of interest. In place of stirring crusades for equality and justice (about which there is plenty of rhetoric) we see careful chartings and recalibrations of marginal, provisional influence by an executive branch that is unshakably wedded to a view of itself as “under siege, twenty-four hours a day,” as Bartlet’s chief of staff explains to a recently hired Republican legal aide.

The logic of these morally obtuse but deeply sentimental preenings of high-office holders is disturbing on many levels, but principally because it dramatizes something real: liberals, long Sundered from the lineaments of any majoritarian politics, have succumbed to the worship of getting and holding power for its own sake. One saw this not merely in the Gore campaign’s diehard (and ultimately self-destructive) scorched-earth efforts to recast the Florida vote in Gore’s favor but also, more pivotally, in the dramatic force with which Clinton recast the presidency’s reasons of state into reasons of self.

Indeed, the moral calculus of *The West Wing*’s presidency is identical to that perfected by Bill Clinton: all the expenditures of political capital, all the day-to-day trench warfare over Capitol turf, the long-term health of the party and the short-term calendar of the national legislature, were subordinated to the expansion of executive self-regard, to the meaningless conceit of “not feeling like this anymore.” Herein resided the stem-winding, therapeutic logic of the year-long national “conversation on race”; the periodic presidential apologies for world-historic wrongs which were usually strategic evasions of actual legislative responsibility; and the fussy feel-good conferences on teen violence and the media. And, needless to say, here sprang

the fathomless victimology that choreographed perjury, suborned testimony, concealed evidence, and mounted dubiously timed bombing raids to prolong a grip on executive power that had long atrophied when it came to steering federal policy and national debate toward any meaningful goal beyond the bunker.

As one might expect, Bill Clinton is among *The West Wing*’s biggest fans. He played host to members of the cast at a White House press-corps dinner, and cast members have turned up at DNC fundraisers, providing entertaining photo ops that illuminated the grand yet confused ambitions of both the TV show and the Clinton White House. He reportedly told Rob Lowe (who plays Bartlet’s deputy communications director, Sam Seaborn) that the show is “renewing people’s faith in public service.” It’s all a bit curious, since the high-minded Josiah Bartlet would seem to be such a pointed rebuke, in both his person and his policymaking, to Clinton. But in life, as on TV, claims of civic loyalty and reckonings of power, legitimacy, political right, and moral trespass—the stuff of history—provide feeble competition for the blinding power of personality. And it has been a long season of indulgently sentimentalizing the abuse of power. Augurs of the Boomer zeitgeist, from Toni Morrison to Joe Eszterhas to Tina Brown to Greil Marcus, agree that Clinton represents an emanation of a noble American tradition, a Huck-like backwoods avatar of charmingly transgressive appetites. He is half the sybaritic, exoticized, Elvis-style son of the South, tweaking the grim moralists and inquisitors who police the right’s DMZ in the nation’s culture combat, and half the aw-shucks poster child of the new global information order, cocking back his head and biting his lip wistfully as he conjures abiding visions of a bridge over the millennium. Before the nation’s scandal-weary eyes Bill Clinton became a pop-cult fable of his own fond imagining, a fantasy figure for liberal partisans who have lost the taste for almost any politics save the full-throated prosecution of meaningless culture wars. It is but a short step from these sorts of reveries to the wholesale invention of

a republic ruled by a benevolent great leader, briskly resetting our moral compass and flattering our lifestyle politics in the safety of our living rooms. In this sense, then, it is entirely fitting that Bill Clinton’s most immediate legacy should be a TV show that lodges the structure of his personality firmly in our collective unconscious, even while strategically erasing its substance.

Of course, it may seem, with the show’s enduring appeal in the dawn of the W. years, that these organizing tropes of the Clinton era are already moldering into harmless TV nostalgia, not unlike the imagineered 1950s of *Happy Days*, or the wide, loud, and burnt-out Ford and Carter caesura of *That ’70s Show*. But this casual view of things underestimates the half-life of Clintonism in both reality and pop culture. George W. Bush demonstrated in his faux-empathic campaign of the conservative heart that Clintonism, being postmodern and post-ideological unto its innermost parts, works as deftly on the tax-cutting, privatizing right as it did within the often unruly union-and-activist ranks of the Democratic Party.

In much the same manner *The West Wing* continues to renew the peculiar, powerful cultural brief by which Clintonism has thrived—and will continue to thrive in the aftermath of the Clinton years. In 1992 candidate Bill Clinton proudly acknowledged that he “always wanted to be in the cultural elite”; *The West Wing* has extravagantly granted his wish, by apostrophizing his Administration (while, of course, airbrushing out its more embarrassing policy failures, crimes, and lapses of morality). But more than that, the enduring appeal of the show, in our popular and political cultures alike, is that it has performed a trick more powerful than probably even Clinton could have imagined. It has made him that most quintessentially American liege of that most desirable American dominion: as an archetype, a fable, a prototype for Jed Bartlet, Bill Clinton, through the good graces of Aaron Sorkin, has become the President of Television. We need some satire, and fast. ■

ON THE WEB: See www.theatlantic.com/westwing for an online sidebar in which former members of the Clinton White House staff comment on *The West Wing*.

THE TRADITION OF THE OLDIE

The NPR 100 shows for better and worse what Americans think is their classical music

BY DAVID SCHIFF

.....

Fans of the recent movie *High Fidelity* know that an obsession with top-song lists is a symptom of male narcissistic personality disorder. The anti-hero (played by John Cusack), a used-record dealer, tries to make sense of his serial disasters with women by ranking and re-ranking popular songs in top-five lists suited to every emotional crisis. The appearance late in 1999 of National Public Radio's "100 most important American musical works of the 20th century" may be a sign that public radio, too, suffers from neediness, and not just during pledge drives. Even if I disagree with the list about half the time, though (and what use is a list if you can't argue with it?), it is reassuring evidence that despite the saturation of our environment with sound fillers, people still care passionately about music.

The question, of course, is what music and which people. If lists are a guy thing, as *High Fidelity* would have it, then so are Web surveys, which usually attract a male, upper-middle-class, lower-middle-aged response. An unspecified group of "NPR staff, critics and scholars" created a ballot of 300 works which they posted on the NPR Web site for ten days, attracting 14,000 votes. Perhaps to lend authority to the final list (available at npr.org), NPR also invited about twenty musicians, including Wynton Marsalis and Michael Feinstein, to vote, even though their impact on the totals would be statistically insignificant. Each of the top 100 works became the subject of a five-to-fifteen-minute segment presented on NPR news programs such as *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered* over twelve months.

Any list invites skepticism, especially one whose pretentious claims would be more appropriate coming from the Wizard of Oz than from Susan Stamberg or Noah Adams. "Here's our definition of

'most important,'" the introduction to the final list on the Web site says.

By virtue of its achievement, beauty, or excellence, the work is an important milestone of American music in the 20th century. It significantly changed the musical landscape, opened new horizons, or in itself had a major effect on American culture and civilization.

Good grief! Unlike *Rolling Stone's* list of top 100 pop songs, the NPR 100 seems contrived, the result of a government-mediated list merger rather than a coherent viewpoint. NPR did not publish the names of its "staff, critics and scholars" (again unlike *Rolling Stone*, which names the people who compile its list) or the actual tallies. So much for the usual meaning of "public."

No doubt the meetings at which the ballot was determined were rancorous; people at NPR seemed touchy on the subject when I called to ask about it. The carefully orchestrated diversity of the ballot and its knowing combination of popular favorites and cult esoterica has a certain academic whiff—it could be required listening for American Music 101. The ballot wasted nominations on obscurities like Peter Mennin's *Moby Dick* and Spike Jones's "Der Fuehrer's Face" while omitting long-respected classical works such as Edgard Varèse's *Ionisation* and Charles Ives's Symphony no. 4, popular musicals like *Bye Bye Birdie* and *The Sound of Music*, and popular songs like "Mrs. Robinson" and—how soon they forget—Michael Jackson's "Thriller."

Whatever the shortcomings of the process, the result is a fascinating mirror of elite and popular musical taste today. By my estimate, sixteen of the top 100 are popular songs from 1900–1949, fifteen are popular songs from 1950–1959, and twenty-five are popular songs or albums from 1960–1979. Just three are

popular recordings from 1980–2000 (the MTV generation does not listen to NPR), and one of these is *Graceland*, which was made by Paul Simon, an artist associated with the sixties as much as with the eighties. Two are religious songs; nine are the scores for stage or film musicals, mostly from the mid-century "golden age"; sixteen are jazz recordings. Six are film scores or "other." Eight are classical works—if you count Ferde Grofé's *Grand Canyon Suite*, a symphonic pops-concert staple, as classical, and Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, a work composed in Paris in 1930, albeit by a future U.S. citizen, as American.

To a cynic, the overwhelming preponderance of songs—as opposed to extended compositions—on the list might appear to reflect the shortened national attention span more than any musical values. Equating the song genre with American music does, however, represent a growing convergence of popular and critical opinions. Writers on American music have always recognized the existence of highbrow and lowbrow, art and pop, "cultivated" and "vernacular" traditions. Until recently most histories of American music, while recognizing the role of popular song, have emphasized the accomplishments of art composers like Ives and Aaron Copland or elevated jazz to the status of "America's classical music" or musical comedy to "American opera." In the past decade film scores have begun to attract similar scholarly attention. Although NPR's ballot amply represented these recently exalted genres, the final list, less conditioned by academic fashion, has a distinctive—and, I would say, more honest—profile. The voters rejected the more musicologically correct candidates and overwhelmingly favored a category of music hitherto scorned by scholars: the oldie.

Thirty years ago expert taste and even some popular opinion would have bowed to the shock of the new, assuming that experiment and provocation were signs of artistic accomplishment. Oldies tell us about the way we were, not about the shape of things to come; they satisfy a need for a usable past. Most American cities have a couple of oldies radio stations. Numbingly re-

peated ads on late-night TV urge us to buy anthologies of the greatest hits from the fifties to the eighties. It is easy to dismiss oldies as the ephemera of the Me Generation. But their transient nature does not negate the importance of a serious aesthetic principle—call it the tradition of the oldie. Let's list the top five components of the oldie aesthetic:

- Oldies are songs, fusions of words and music.
- Oldies (when they were new) marked the passage from adolescence to adulthood, from hormones to heartbreak.
- Oldies are forever linked to their actual historical setting, naming the moment of our fortunate fall into identity and conveying a palpable sense of place and time.
- Oldies are our inner classics. They shape the soundtrack of our lives around indelible emotional moments that remain as vivid as a presidential assassination or an earthquake.
- Oldies, because they are products of mass media, connect the lives of millions, often defining a generation's lifestyle and politics.

Looked at this way, oldies become not just respectable but eminently respectable. In fact, the oldie aesthetic explains the persistent appeal of a lot of classical music, particularly opera, as well as of popular songs. Though we associate the classical category with instrumental music, its prestige is a recent phenomenon, barely a hundred years old and fading fast. Even in the heyday of classical music, symphonies, usually in individual movements, were used to usher people in and out of the theater for concerts that featured operatic favorites. For most of musical history and in most societies music has meant song, with the essential pleasure of music coming from the way a singer, whether a Callas or a Crosby, brings words and music together.

Oldies are mini-operas. You might not suspect a link between Richard Strauss and the Supremes, but doesn't *Der Rosenkavalier* tell the same story as "Where Did Our Love Go"—with a

similarly potent blend of nostalgia and eroticism? High-minded listeners might complain that Strauss is second-rate high art, devoid of seriousness, a tragic sense of life, and innovative daring—a charge that could be leveled against most of the works on the NPR 100. But think of all the musical qualities that oldies, whether by Strauss or by the Supremes, provide instead: the way they link the self and history, psychology and culture; the way they accept the passage of time rather than demanding the timeless status of respectable classics. In her great *scena* in Act I of *Der Rosenkavalier* the Marschallin, a thirty-year-old married woman conducting an affair with a seventeen-year-old boy, describes how she goes through her palace at night stopping all the clocks, to no avail. Listening to "Where Did Our Love Go" lets us, like the Marschallin, play with time or for time, by taking us back to the emotional realities of 1964. Of course, this works only if you were somewhere between the ages of thirteen and twenty-five in 1964. This time-bound state is the essence of oldies: because they are not universal, because my oldies are not necessarily yours, they are all the more tightly wedded to history. At our house the favorite oldie is Kate and Anna McGarrigle's "First Born," an instant time travel to Manhattan in 1977—our Manhattan in *our* 1977, perhaps not yours.

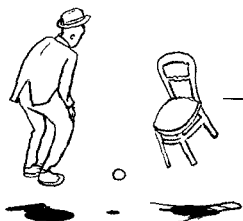
Seen not as the opposite of classical music but as an aesthetic expression that thrives in classical and pop repertoires alike, the oldie may shed some light on the paltry showing of concert music on NPR's list. The minimal appearance of classics is on the face of it harsh evidence of the irrelevance of the concert hall to American culture. Atonal modernist works did not make the final cut (they have gone out of style even in academia), but neither did conservative classics like Roy Harris's Third Symphony, Samuel Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, and Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, or postmodern crowd pleasers like George Crumb's *Black*

Angels, John Adams's *Nixon in China*, John Corigliano's Symphony no. 1; and even Philip Glass's *Einstein on the Beach*.

According to this list, American composers, no matter what their style, have hardly anything to show for the past century of work—a sobering, if not exactly surprising, message. (When I saw the list, I imagined a *Daily News* headline: "NPR TO COMPOSERS—DROP DEAD!") It would be interesting to know if this absence is a scathing judgment more of American art music than of its European counterpart: is the marginalizing of classical music a local phenomenon—the result of relentless competition from a vital pop scene—or a worldwide reaction against an outmoded form? Not surprisingly, when I showed the list to classical musicians, they were outraged. When I showed it to college students, they didn't even notice the paucity of concert works, though they did protest the absence of their favorite bands—who are recording the oldies of the future.

It's easy to play a blame game about the classical entries—to blame NPR for pandering, classical radio stations for trivializing, and modern composers for alienating audiences. But I think the NPR 100 shows that many kinds of popular music now perform the functions once exclusively associated with art music. Over the century popular songs have expressed patriotism and social protest and love and loss with a conviction that few classical scores—though not as few as the handful on the list—have approached. The landslide victory of popular songs over symphonies and concertos and operas points to one critical failure of classical music over the past century: the failure to fuse living language with music. From "What'll I Do?" to "Let It Be" and beyond, popular songs have echoed and amplified the spoken language, turning its most potent phrases into melodies. Perhaps art composers, following the modernist dictum to "purify the dialect of the tribe," never really learned to speak that language first. It may not be too late to start. ■

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THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

March Theme

This puzzle's grid is divided into 15 blocks in sets of three labeled A – E. Each clue answer is to be scattered in its designated block such that a continuous sequence of 30 unclued theme entries (some of them admittedly unconventional) will be seen in the completed grid to weave back and forth, row by row from top left to bottom right. Parentheses after each clue contain its answer letters' positions: numbers match those in the grid, which also mark the theme entries' first letters; letters show only which row of the block is occupied, leaving the correct column to be deduced. Letters in the shaded central column come not from clue answers but from crossing theme entries; they provide the puzzle's theme in a four-word phrase. Clue answers include three proper nouns; three unclued entries consist of two words.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 95.

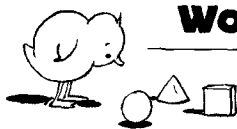
CLUES

- A. Sign left on board containing "X" (d,e,a,b,c,e,1)
That guy will torment (e,b,d,b)
Receiving cipher, hide number (5,d,a,c)
Try following beat initially on drum (16,f,j,i,h)
Drone or wit (f,g,g,h,j)
Skillet holding one egg, soft (i,g,i,f,j)
Speedy group of trucks (m,l,k,m,29)
Long suit for the heartless (25,o,o,k,l)
Bill corrals the first person with meaningless information (n,21,m,o,n)
- B. Malevolent dwarf possessing excellent set of chromosomes (b,e,c,b,a,d)
In glee, charge freeloader (d,b,a,c,9)
Border patrol's opening marijuana (c,e,8,a)
Write a story about Zelda's foremost handicap (f,i,j,h,g,i,h,11)
Cucumber sandwiches cap off sweet treat (20,f,i,12,g,15,j)
Tubes of "Isotix" bode ill (*two words*) (1,30,n,k,l; k,26,o,n,l)

- One passing high card quickly (m,n,o,m,k)
- C. Overweight Gore is disastrous (4,d,a,b,e)
Unconventional March delight (e,c,a,c,d)
Old World element of amateur operation (f,i,g,f,j,h)
Running after very quickly (i,j,h,g)
Furious at all outside of group (n,m,o,22,l)
Fragment about radical cardinal's remark? (k,l,o,m,n)
- D. Look into missing boutiques (7,c,b,e,c,a)
Help carrying first of hard disk drives away (10,d,a,b,a)
In audience, recognize a flood survivor (e,b,d,6)
Superior at keeping a couple of bees out (j,f,i,f,h)
Crazy about island's temptations (18,i,h,g,j)
Pair of friars eating large bird bone (13,g,f,j,h)

- Below average private meal (k,o,l,n,l,k)
Swamp is home to red plant with fronds (27,o,n,l)
Extremely cold outside of police car (28,k,m,m,o)
- E. Revealing skirt taken in by doctor and saint (e,a,c,b,d,e,b)
Shorten fastener (b,e,d,3)
Growth on the foot and ears? (d,c,c,a)
Worried after backing gun control (f,h,i,g,i,h,f,j)
Mushroom omelette originally allowed on board public vehicle (14,j,g,f,g,i,19)
Heard female deer or bucks (o,n,l,m,n)
Clumsily search general climbing gear (1,k,o,24,m)
Ordinary guy taking up endlessly large amount of work (23,o,m,n,k)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.



WORD COURT

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

G. PEPPER HOLLAND, of Mississippi State, Mississippi, writes, *"The current tendency—in the South, anyway—to tack an e on point, as in Plantation Pointe, seems as ridiculous to me as Ye Olde Shoppe signs."*

I like *pointes* still less than *Ye Olde Shoppes*, because at least there's a satisfying explanation for the latter. The *Y* in *Ye* originated in an Old English rune called thorn, which signified the sound *th* although it came to look like a capital *Y*; thorn persisted into Middle English times. Even then, however, there were no dictionaries to speak of, so people who wanted to spell had to improvise—hence the extra letters in *olde* and *shoppe*.

None of this, of course, applies to the contemporary penchant for adding *es* to the ends of words—which is not exclusively a southern tendency, nor does it afflict only *point*. I fear that restaurants with the word *grille* in their names—a word that is supposed to describe ornamental metalwork and the like, as opposed to *grill*, which properly refers either to a device upon which food is cooked over an open flame or to a restaurant that features food so cooked—are spreading across our land like wildfire. Word Court called the headquarters of the Capital Grille chain, hoping to learn what its founders had had in mind when they named their first restaurant, in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1990. The good sport who got stuck answering the question used the word "elegant" twice and explained, too, that the *e* was meant to be "a nod toward tradition." That must be *Ye olde* tradition that fell out of fashion in the seventeenth century, when dictionaries came in.

More to the point is *pointe* itself. Some few *pointes* are distinctly French in origin—Grosse Pointe, Michigan, for example, and the ballet term *en pointe*, meaning "on tiptoe"—and these are hard to fault. But then there are places like

your Plantation Pointe, a new development in South Carolina, and three Pointe or Pointe Hilton resorts, in greater Phoenix. The first of these resorts opened in 1976, under the name The Pointe at Squaw Peak, so it was probably on the leading edge of the trend you mention. A representative of the Pointe South Mountain Resort told Word Court cheerfully that the *e* was used "I suppose to fancy it up." In recent years a public school, Mountain Pointe High School, was built near this latter resort. To come up with the school's name, "we just copied," a spokesperson for the school said. Oh, good.



MICHAEL GOULD, of Portland, Oregon, writes, *"Could you please wave your magic wand and make the popular redundant hypersuperlative disappear forever? I've had it up to here with 'the single most important scientific discovery of the century' and 'the single worst disaster in aviation history.'"*

I agree with you that *single* in phrases like your examples adds clutter instead of the emphasis that is surely intended. Unfortunately, nothing short of sorcery is likely to get rid of it. *Single most*, *single worst*, and so forth are very common, and I can find only a single, mild objection to them in any of the major usage guides: *The New Fowler's Modern English*

Usage mentions that *single most* is "in strict terms ... tautologous."

PAT DODDS, of Fresno, California, writes, *"I was recently looking up the word Monday in the dictionary with my third-grade students, and we made an amazing discovery. The preferred pronunciation of Monday is 'mun-dee,' with a long-e sound, not 'mun-day,' with a long-a sound. I checked other days of the week, and they were all the same: 'sun-dee' and so on. I checked other dictionaries and found the same thing. This doesn't sound right to me. Can you please explain?"*

Dictionaries do tend to give both pronunciations, and some newish ones, such as the *Encarta* and the *Oxford American*, both from 1999, even put "mun-day" first. As for the long reign of "mun-dee," another correspondent knows more about this than I do, so I will let him explain: Frank G. Nelson, an emeritus professor of English at the University of Hawaii at Hilo, writes, *"All my old teachers, from the first grade through my doctorate, and my former-schoolmistress mother before them, insisted that the only acceptable pronunciation of the last syllable in the names of the days of the week was an unstressed '-dy,' as in candy and handy—that to sound it like the 'day' in payday or May Day was a 'spelling pronunciation' used by the imperfectly literate. But that was well over half a century ago, between World War I and World War II. Today it is impossible to turn on the TV or radio without hearing some journalist speak of events happening 'mun-day' or 'thurs-day.'"*

Do you have a language question or dispute? Write to Word Court in care of The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send e-mail to MsGrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court. MsGrammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.

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